

FREE AGENT

THE EDDIE CHAPMAN STORY

By Frank Owen

Some Press Opinions

"One of the most exciting and fantastically thrillerish of the war . . . makes fascinating reading."

THE OBSERVER

". . . as enthralling an adventure story as has come out of the war."

TIME AND TIDE

". . . fascinating story . . . extremely gripping."

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN

"Excellent adventure reading."

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

". . . a thrilling business "

THE SPHERE

"Tremendously exciting."

GLASGOW HERALD

STUDENTS OF Cloak and Dagger may sometimes wonder what happens to retired safe-blowers and wartime double agents in the humdrum days of Peace, Welfare States, Austerity and Currency Control. The answer is to be found in the further adventures of the hero of perhaps the best true record of this type to be published, *The Eddie Chapman Story*.

Eddie and "the boys" began operations on a comparatively *piano* note, with some perfunctory smuggling up and down the Irish coast. Finding the rich local brand of hospitality somewhat out of key with the mood of Sir Stafford Cripps, they decided on their own account to enter the spheres of high international finance, and for this purpose purchased a second-hand aeroplane and flew to that Mecca of respectable international banking, Tangier. Here, failing to corner the lobster market, they turned their attention to bullion, and many a shining ingot or bag of diamonds became airborne and found its way to Casablanca, Paris, Barcelona or Madrid.

In the meantime, it came to Eddie's ears that civilization had descended upon the Gold Coast in the form of a pre-fabricated democracy, in urgent need of its own pre-fabricated houses, harbours, highways, bridges and government buildings. Who could arrange this better than the most famous living exponent of safe-blowing with gelignite? He proceeded at once to Africa, but let us tread lightly over the deals and negotiations which ensued, which have in any case been fully covered in the reports of the Select Committee investigating them. Averting our gaze from the spectacle of several Ministers and officials languishing in prison cells, we come to the moment when the smells and fortunes of Tangier beckoned Eddie once again.

With a fellow man about town, Mr. Billy Hill, he now decided to become a yachtsman. The good ship *Flamingo*, a former naval craft, was appropriately fitted out and manned by an augmented crew of "the boys", including several of the more distinguished products of Borstal and Wandsworth. Her home port was Tangier, and one of her first assignments was to kidnap from Madagascar no less a personage than the Sultan of Morocco on the instructions of a group of Arab Nationalists. What happened after that becomes, with the publication of this book, a matter of history.



THE AUTHOR

FREE AGENT

Being the further Adventures
of

EDDIE CHAPMAN



LONDON

ALLAN WINGATE

Allan Wingate (Publishers) Ltd.
12 Beauchamp Place, London, S.W.3

Made and printed in Great Britain
by The Alcuin Press, Welwyn Garden City

First Published November 1913

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TO
HARRY AND CHARLES MATTHEWS,
THE LAST OF THE CORINTHIANS

PART ONE

The Merchant Trader

WHEN WAR ends, it leaves a gap in one's life that is not easily filled. One has lived on a peak of anticipation, either of terror or excitement. Then comes the quiet after the storm when one realizes that the chances of a sudden death have become more remote. Yet one still feels oddly insecure and afraid; afraid of the vagueness and economic instability of the future.

Personally, all I wanted to do when the war ended was to get rid of a strange feeling of delayed reaction. I was highly nervous; my body motor had all at once run down. Luckily, I still had quite a substantial sum of money in my pocket—enough for a long holiday. I was not one to seek the quiet of some country village or farm. What I wanted was crowds of people around me—people with whom I could feel secure.

Uppermost in my mind was the desire to find Betty, my girl, whom I had last seen when I dived through a hotel window before my arrest in Jersey.¹ To this end I contacted two ex-Scotland Yard detectives, who had now started a private agency, and briefed them to try to find Betty.

At that time, I was staying at Grosvenor House, and night after night, every plush club in Town had a good customer. My two detectives went on searching for Betty without success. The last trace they had found of her was at an hotel in the Isle of Man, back in 1903. After that, they had drawn a blank.

¹ *The Eddie Chapman Story*. Published by Allan Wingate.

One day when I had arranged to lunch with them at the Berkeley, they told me of their lack of success.

"Can't you give us a visual description of her?" one of them asked.

The Berkeley was crowded with the usual fashionable lunchtime mob—beautiful girls, prosperous old businessmen, dowagers and dapper young Guards officers and their "Debs". I glanced round the room. A girl with blonde hair sat at the end of the restaurant with her back to me. She was lunching with a major in the Horse Guards.

"That girl," I said, "looks exactly like her from the back." The blonde turned.

"Jesus!" I shouted. "It is Betty. Excuse me, gentlemen."

I am sure the two detectives thought I was either tight or crazy as they stared after me as I dashed across to where Betty was sitting.

I tapped her on the shoulder. She turned and dropped her coffee cup. We had not seen each other for seven years.

"Where have you sprung from?" she gasped.

"From over there," I said pointing to my table.

"Meet my fiancé," she said quickly.

The fiancé and I eyed each other coldly.

When Betty and I were married, we took a charming house in West Halkin Street, and, being an energetic girl, she started a beauty parlour. I did exactly nothing. I just ate, drank and made merry. But even doing nothing becomes hard work in the end. Besides, funds were running low, so I shook off my lethargy and started in search of something to do.

It so happens that I have always been fond of ships and

the sea. They are in my blood, for both my brother and father are sailors. My brother, Winston, came to me with a proposition that took my fancy. He knew of a steamer, slightly larger than a "Glasgow Puffer", that was up for sale at Appledore, in Devon. She was a bargain, since she could be run with a crew of five hands and carried 150 tons of cargo. The only snag to her was that she was coal-burning.

Together, Winston and I went down to see the owner of the *Earl Grey*, as she was called. In the local pub on the quayside, I met William Henry Breech for the first time. He was quite a character—one of the hardest drinking, hardest hitting sailors who had ever skippered a small tramp round the coast. His whisky-weathered voice was a joy to hear. Bill belonged to a day and age when they built wooden ships and men of iron. The stories about him were legion. When he docked, wise publicans closed their doors, for his bull-like roar soon shattered the tranquillity of the harbourside.

"I'm Captain Bill Breech, the best sailor in Devon," he would bellow, banging his great, hairy fist on the bar. "Only pigs eat *and* drink, so drink up me fine friends and have one on Bill Breech!"

Bill and I soon got down to business. The *Earl Grey* was anchored right opposite the pub, and over pints of bitter and whisky chasers, we started bargaining.

"Five thousand pound is what I wants for her," Bill said. "I'm broke. Give me one on account."

I passed a pound across the table.

"I'll give you four thousand," I told him.

"Four thousand seven hundred and fifty," Bill insisted.

"Four thousand."

"Four thousand five hundred," Bill pleaded.

"Four thousand."

"Another drink," he shouted to the publican. "Two pints and two double whiskies."

We drank again.

"Now," Bill eyed me, "I'll spin you four thousand two hundred and fifty or four thousand."

"Right," I said.

Bill spun, I called. I lost. Bill roared his delight.

"Give me something on account," he demanded.

I gave him one hundred pounds.

"Two bottles of whisky, two bottles of rum and two cases of beer," he shouted. "Wake up, you!" he roared to a character sleeping in a corner of the bar. The body woke up and came across to Bill. He was, if anything, even larger than Breech, for whom he had worked for years as mate. As often as not the two of them sailed the *Earl Grey* alone; Breech on the bridge and "Blow-me-Down", the mate, down below stoking the fires. When they felt like sleeping, they lashed the wheel and slept. But Bill Breech always knew where he was. Even in the thickest fog and the dirtiest weather he never lost his way or damaged his ship. He is the only man I know who, when dying for a drink, smashed the compass and swallowed the alcohol out of it!

Winston and I took possession of the *Earl Grey* forthwith. She was in good condition and only needed painting and cleaning. We lived aboard her and did this work ourselves, lying in Appledore the while. It is a great spot and those men of Devon, when they like you, go out of their way to be helpful.

One of the local shipyards, P. J. Harris & Sons, was of invaluable service to us. My brother had previously superintended the conversion of some craft for the Mauritian Government in the yard that had the reputation

for doing the finest woodwork in that part of the country. The firm's director, Uncle Percy, was a revered figure. He took a keen interest in our little venture and gave us a great deal of sound advice about cargoes and shipping agents.

During the war, the firm was building M.T.B.s and other small craft for the Navy, and on one occasion, Lord Louis Mountbatten paid a special visit to the yard. When Uncle Percy was told of the great sailor's impending visit, he smiled and said: "That's very kind of him."

Then all the staff started cleaning the offices and squaring up the yard. When they came to Uncle Percy's office, which was notoriously untidy, his anger was aroused for the first time for years.

"Get out of here!" he shouted, "and get back to your jobs." His word was law.

When Lord Louis arrived, dear old Uncle Percy was at his desk, working in his shirtsleeves. He pushed his spectacles back on the top of his head.

"So you're Lord Louis Mountbatten," he said, holding out his hand. Lord Louis shook it warmly, and so the two men, with one common love—ships—met for the first time.

Slowly and steadily, our ship was made ready for sea. From London, I brought Will Kentish, to skipper her, and two other sailors. The complement was Kentish, skipper; myself, mate, and Tommy Turpin, deckhand. Winston was the chief engineer and Freddie Connor, the stoker. Rory was our cook.

We sailed with our first cargo from Barry to Penrhyn. At the latter we berthed underneath a giant silo and in a matter of minutes the grain was pouring into our hold. In two hours we had loaded our full 150 tons. As I was being paid at the rate of thirty shillings a ton, this, I thought, was not a bad beginning.

The *Earl Grey* was a sound little ship, but we quickly discovered that she had more tricks than a bucking bronco. If, when she was loaded, she had a slight list, then it was sometimes the devil's own job steering her. Her top speed was only six knots, and nothing I have ever sailed in before or since, rolled quite as much as she did. In a heavy sea, it was almost impossible to stand aboard her. With the decks awash, we just rolled from side to side. Moreover, her motion was never regular, for she seemed to do a little spin in the middle of a roll, and the effect was disconcerting to the hearts and stomachs of even the toughest sailors. None of us ever got used to it.

Life aboard the *Earl Grey* was hard. On deck, we worked watches of six hours on and six off. But down below, my brother fared worse than I did, as he had not only to look after the main engine but, stripped to the waist, tend the two fires that continually needed stoking. His was a sweaty, dusty and thankless task.

On such a small coal-burning ship, it was impossible to keep anything clean. Whenever we bunkered up, a thick cloud of coal dust permeated everywhere and into everything—even our food had a strange taste of coal about it.

When we reached Penrhyn on that first trip, we quickly had our hatch covers off, and aboard came a party of sturdy dockers to unload us. It was a slow job, for all the grain had to be put into sacks, hoisted by the ship's winch on to waiting lorries, that in turn drove the sacks to a Government storage depot. All the time we kept our fires going and every twenty-four hours these had to be cleaned to keep the fire bars from becoming choked with clinker.

Work never seemed to stop aboard. Stores of all kinds

had to be taken on, wages sheets drawn up, tax returns, ship's manifest and clearance papers to be made out, bunkering and water taken aboard. We worked often twenty hours a day, but if it was a full life, it was a good one. We always had comrades around us and, at nights, there were the friendly dockside taverns where the sailors from many lands bawled the old sea chanties—"Rolling down to Rio", "I'll take you home again, Kathleen" and the rest. Those sea choruses sung by really hard old shellbacks, were well worth hearing. They had all the spirit of the wind, the sea, the power and the loneliness of a sailor's life about them.

My agent at Penrhyn came to me with the surprising news that he had booked us a return cargo of grain from Penrhyn to Barry. As I had just brought just such a cargo from the latter, I was somewhat bewildered. We were working for the Ministry of Food and on inquiry, I found that this strange procedure was not in the least unusual. Apparently, someone in the Ministry would order grain to be sent to Barry and on arrival someone else would order it to be sent back. Why the cargo was not left where it was, defeated me. But, after all, that was none of my business. Besides, I was being well paid for carting it back and forth!

After a few months of trading up and around the southern coast of England, trade for small vessels became slack, so Winston and I decided to try fresh waters. We loaded a cargo of bricks and sailed for Belfast, where, on arrival, a good proposition was put to us.

Newry, a border town in Northern Ireland, was completely without any cargo service to and from Glasgow. All the local farmers, who produced mostly apples and potatoes, sent their goods by rail and lorry from the surrounding district of Belfast. This method cost them

at least an additional ten shillings a ton. Also there were many complaints about goods being left behind and not arriving in time for the market. Since Newry and district, in turn, bought manufactured goods and grain from Glasgow, it struck me that some form of service could be started between the two ports. So I travelled down to Newry, where there was quite a decent harbour, to talk to the local town council and tradesmen. I found that two companies operated from Newry and that the only transit shed in the harbour belonged to the Irish Coastlines. Thus it was necessary for me to get hold of a shed.

A small canal led from the harbour to the centre of the town, on each side of which were numbers of sheds and warehouses suitable for storage. But the main problem was a difficult one. Not only had two bridges to be raised to allow passage to the *Earl Grey*, but it was uncertain whether there was sufficient water for the ship to moor alongside the sheds for loading and unloading. I borrowed a rowing boat and set off with a headline to sound the canal. The depth was 6 ft. 6 in. As the *Earl Grey* had a draft of 6 ft. this gave her a clearance of 6 in. Unfortunately, the canal shallowed at the sides, and in addition to this, since the ship had a beam of 14 ft. 4 in., the width of the bridges left little to spare. However, if one never tries anything, one never succeeds. So I brought the ship from Belfast up the Carlingford Lock to Newry, and after some pretty delicate manoeuvring managed to berth alongside the sheds.

The townspeople were delighted, for *Earl Grey* was the first ship in the canal for many years. As there was not enough room to turn round in the canal, we were forced to take her out stern first—not an easy job with a ship that, at best, never steered particularly well!

I made arrangements to take a storage shed and a small

office from one of the local merchants. The newspapers gave our proposed service a good write-up and soon we had substantial orders for cargo. I opened my office with a booking clerk and a typist. A good agent was appointed in Belfast and Glasgow to look after us. We were in business.

Supplies of apples arrived from the farmers, ten tons from one, five from another until I had about 100 tons. The cargo was carried at £2 per ton, and out of this sum I paid for everything—dock labour, offices, as well as the running expenses of the *Earl Grey*.

Owing to the amount of work in the office, we decided that Winston should run the ship while I looked after things ashore. So a new mate replaced me. But I felt fed up at having to leave the *Earl Grey* and stood sadly on the quay to watch the little ship leave on her first trip.

I had embarked on a difficult venture. If it was to be a success, we had to try to run to a schedule, no matter what the weather was like, and this was a tough job for a little ship in the Irish Sea. We timed everything so that she did a once weekly turn-round. The passage from Newry to Glasgow took some twenty hours and vice versa. This allowed five days for loading and unloading.

My chief worry was the crew, for it was necessary that they should work a seven-day week, which entailed paying them high wages in order to keep them satisfied. Accordingly I worked out a scheme whereby the crew were paid a bonus relative to the amount of cargo carried.

Another difficulty was with the dockers. Even if I booked only ten tons of cargo, I was compelled by union rules to pay for a full complement of dockers, that, including a stevedore, checker and winchman, numbered twenty-one men. After some experience, I found that my loading and unloading costs averaged twenty-five shillings per ton—a very expensive item.

Freight from Scotland was, to begin with, slow coming in. The little ship carried all manner of cargo; manufactured goods, steel rods, cement, wheat and cases of jam. Then one day I received a message from my Glasgow agent saying we had been offered a good contract to carry seven tons of jam for Ticklers every week from Glasgow to Newry. The freight was good, but my agent told me that special care must be taken with the cargo. One of the reasons we had been given the contract was that Ticklers had received many complaints from their customers about damage in transit.

When the first consignment of jam arrived, I went down to inspect it, and found to my disgust that it was badly damaged. Our insurance rates were such that we had to pay the first £100 of damage to any cargo, so after a talk with Winston, I decided to go to Glasgow and watch the loading.

When the dockers came to stow the jam, they stacked the cases in tiers, three high, near the after bulkhead. The cases were cardboard and all the tops of the jars were showing. Dressed in an old blue jersey, I was sitting on the quay with Winston. The dockers, thinking, I suppose, that I was a seaman and not the owner, carried on their work as usual. One of them clambered on top of the cases in his hob-nailed boots and started walking across the jam jars.

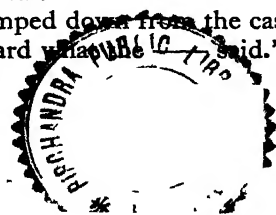
"Why don't you take your bloody great boots off?" I shouted down at him.

Ten pairs of eyes glared at me from the ship's hold.

"Are you talking to me?" shouted back the offending docker.

"Yes, you flat-footed halfwit—I am talking to you," I bawled back.

He jumped down from the cases. "Come on," he said. "you heard what he said."



They all started clambering up the ladder out of the hold.

"Steady on!" Winston muttered.

But, by now, I had completely blown my top. The dockers came towards me. I thought probably they would sling me into the dock.

"Who are you?" asked the ringleader.

"Well, this ship is mine and I'm responsible for the cargo," I told him.

"Whoever you are, you can't speak to my men like that," he said. "We're striking!"

"Striking? You dirty lot of Communist bastards!" I yelled at him. "You ruin my cargo—then strike." I was wild with rage.

The spokesman for the Docker's Union came down to see me. I had to apologize. The strike lasted four hours, but I was still forced to pay the men a full day's wage.

I made many friends in Newry and often, for relaxation, I would cross over the border into Eire. Those border towns in Ireland are fascinating, for they are the centres of a new industry—smuggling. No one should be fooled by the Irish Nationalists when they say that they want the six counties back. If that ever happens, hundreds of people now having a lot of fun and making good livings would be out of work.

Everything is smuggled across the border—cigarettes, whisky, cloth, stockings and, on a larger scale, cattle.

On a Saturday it was a joy to take a bus from Newry to Dundalk. It was always full up with women with large shopping baskets, who all wore voluminous skirts and coats. One would see them scurrying from shop to shop. The pubs did a roaring trade as the Guinness flowed. Even small sons and daughters were pressed into service, and I remember seeing one enterprising mother open her

small son's overcoat, fitted on the inside with special large pockets, and stow away dozens of pairs of nylons. A party of fat, middle-aged women I passed in a side lane, had their skirts hitched up, and pounds of sugar and packets of cigarettes were disappearing into their old-fashioned bloomers, tightly laced at the knees. When we boarded the bus, all the women looked as though they were in advanced stages of pregnancy.

On arrival at the Customs, the officer in charge of the search was met by forty pairs of angry female eyes.

"Anything to declare?" he shouted.

It would have taken a braver man than he to have searched any of them, for they looked as if they would have lynched him.

I do not know if it is true, but there is a story told of an Irish priest who was caught with a suspicious-looking bottle. When asked by the Customs officer what it contained, he said: "Water."

The officer drew the cork and tasted the contents.

"Water, Father? This tastes awfully like whisky to me."

"Oh, praise be the saints in Heaven!" said the old priest. "Another miracle!"

At nights, the Customs patrols on the border ran into herds of cattle being driven over. Then wild fights would break out and heavy casualties suffered by both sides.

While the *Earl Grey* was waiting for a cargo, I decided to pay a visit to Drogheda with Davy O'Connell, one of the crew. Davy had already done seven years in prison for his activities with the I.R.A. He was a great card and a mine of information on everything Irish. Never was Davy broke. When a little down on his luck, he would go into any pub and start singing Irish airs. I have known him, in Glasgow, bring tears to the eyes of homesick

Irishmen with his rendering of "Kevin Barry". Always he came back to the ship with a sack or two of Guinness slung over his shoulder.

Davy was determined that I should visit the cathedral in Drogheda. It was beautiful. The faithful were at Mass when we entered. One of the most interesting relics in the church is the head of Blessed Oliver Plunket, which is held in great veneration. As I looked at the head in its casket, I whispered to Davy: "I wonder what would happen if I stole Oliver Cromwell's head and substituted it for Blessed Oliver Plunket's?" *

Davy looked aghast, and when we came out of the cathedral, said: "Eddie, that oppressor of the people—that villain," and proceeded to give a long tirade against Cromwell, speaking as if he were still alive. "If such a thing ever happened, it would definitely start a revolution," he said in awe.

We received a good contract to carry grain from Glasgow to Newry, so I decided to make the next trip across in the ship since Kentish had to leave us on account of family business. On the way over, Winston told me he had been having trouble with the crew. I paid them a standard wage, plus their food money, together with a bonus, and each man was supposed to buy his own food, which the cook prepared for him. Although this system looked fine on paper, in practice, it fell down. Instead of buying food, the hands relied on what they could scrounge from the ship's emergency rations or raided our private supplies. Every Saturday night they came aboard laden with enough beer to start an "off licence".

I read them the riot act, and finished up by saying: "If you don't buy food this time with the money you're given, then you get nothing from the ship's stores and nothing from my brother or myself."

We sailed that night from Glasgow laden with grain, after I had picked up a new skipper from the labour exchange; a dour chap from the north-east coast. The boys came aboard rather the worse for wear, carrying their usual quota of brewery produce.

With a falling glass and a forecast of northerly gales, we dropped down the Clyde and saw the gale cones hoisted on the pier at Greenock.

Our usual course was to creep down under the lee of the Isle of Arran and then head for Garran Point, just north of Belfast Lough. Using all the lee we could, we hugged the coastline to Carlingford and made our way home to Newry. This time, as we came abreast of the Pladda lighthouse on Arran, down came the storm—a full nor'-wester. The tarpaulin covering the cargo hatch was worn and had a slight tear in it. Although I had bought a new one, I had not yet fitted it.

Soon the *Earl Grey* was rolling terribly. The skipper and I were in the wheelhouse. Below us, the decks were awash. I heard a noise like a giant tearing sandpaper as the tarpaulin, taking the brunt of a heavy sea, ripped down the centre.

"That's done it!" the skipper shouted. "If the sea gets to the grain, it'll swell, and this being a welded ship, she'll burst like a balloon. Get all hands and replace the tarpaulin."

I went down on deck, fought my way for'ard to the crew's quarters and routed them out of their drunken sleep. I was soaked to the skin, so I stripped off and told the boys to do the same. It was cold and the job we had to do was a dangerous one, for we had to knock all the chocks out of the hatch cover to release the torn tarpaulin, before replacing it. The seas were now huge as we were in the centre of a full gale and the little ship echoed like a

brass drum as wave after wave beat against her. Her deck was streaming with water, sometimes waist-high, at others, we were completely enveloped in green water. Stringing two lifelines fore and aft, to which we hung on grimly, we began knocking out the chocks.

Gradually the tarpaulin came free. I bent down for a few seconds, letting go the precious lifeline, and tugged at the sodden canvas cover, just as a huge sea swept across the deck. It caught me off balance and I was within inches of being carried overboard when someone grabbed me by the hair, hauling me back, coughing and spluttering for breath. Grasping the lifeline again I looked up and saw Davy.

"Thanks, brother," I gasped. "Christ, that was close!"

By now the seas were pouring between the hatch boards and as we struggled with the new tarpaulin, the wind wrenched it out of our hands, so that it flailed our naked bodies red-raw. After a two-hour battle, we fixed it into position, but I was still desperately anxious about the grain, for I had no means of knowing how much water had got into the hold.

There was nowhere to run for shelter, and as we came abeam of the Ailsa Craig, the tide turned against us. Hour after hour we fought the gale. "God!" I thought, "it can't get any worse. This must be the limit of it. It must blow itself out soon." But the gale gathered strength.

I always feel a thrill of exaltation in a storm at sea. It seems the supreme challenge to all one's capabilities. Before its rage one feels frightened, small and puny in comparison to the godlike elements.

All the crew, except Winston who was in the engine-room, were now huddled in the wheelhouse.

"Send it down, you hounds of hell!" I shouted to the wind. The skipper, who was a religious man, crossed himself.

Now it was growing dark and yet there was no sign of relief from the fury of the gale. About half a mile away a small coaster was sending up distress rockets. We could do nothing to help her, for we were just surviving ourselves. Since we had no radio, we watched her being driven on to the waiting rocks, the seas pounding her to pieces, as one distress flare after another spent themselves in the darkness. Then torrential rain blotted the doomed ship from our sight. Later, we learnt that she was lost with all hands.

We had been twenty-four hours at sea and, since it was impossible to cook any food, the crew were keeping themselves going with the booze they had brought aboard at Glasgow, while the skipper, Winston and I had cold ham, milk and a few sandwiches. I was still determined that the crew should learn a lesson the hard way, so I told both my brother and the skipper on no account to give them anything to eat. They needed just such a storm to drive home that lesson.

When we came abeam of Belfast Lough, I decided to put in for shelter. After we had anchored, I cooked steaks for Winston and the skipper, while Davy stood watching me as though he regretted not having let me drown.

The whole of the following day the storm raged, and still the crew went without food. But now, we too ran out of provisions, so I got out the fishing tackle, baited the hooks with bacon rind and presently caught a dogfish. Hungry faces were watching and Davy seized the catch, hurrying it off to the galley. Before the fish was cooked, the crew had eaten it, half raw. In all, I caught a dozen fish, a few small whiting and a skate, which was enough to satisfy everyone aboard.

At last the storm spent itself and we left Belfast Lough,

making our way to Newry without further incident. As soon as we docked, the crew were off ashore and returned later with enough food to last them for a month.

For a few weeks everything was quiet. I did a few trips on the *Earl Grey* to break the monotony of my office work. Business was good. I found Davy a delightful companion, always full of humour, who deserved his title of the Rabelais of Dublin. Life with him was never dull; the wine and song flowed. Unfortunately, he was no seaman, and my north-east coast skipper insisted on discipline aboard his ship. One day he came to me bursting with suppressed rage.

"Either that Irish lunatic goes, or I go," he told me. "There's not room for the two of us."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"What's wrong! Everything! He can't cook, he doesn't know how to make fast a rope and will never learn to steer. I give him a course and half an hour later I find him steering with one hand and reading a copy of Wells' *History of the World* and twenty degrees off course!"

I sent for Davy. "Is there anything you can do, apart from writing poetry which I like?" I asked.

"When I was in Wandsworth," he answered. "I was a painter and I painted nearly the whole darned prison in my time!"

So we set him to work painting ship.

A few hours later, the skipper came to me again hopping with rage. "Come and look at this," he demanded.

I went on deck. There was Davy at the top of the mast which he had painted from the bottom upwards.

"Looks fine, doesn't it?" he shouted.

"Fine be b——d," bellowed the skipper. "How the hell do you think you're going to get down?"

When Davy reached the deck, there was more paint on him than on the mast!

The winter in the Irish Sea is murder for small ships, and try as we would, it was impossible for us to maintain our scheduled service. The weather was against us, and although we put to sea when much larger vessels were weatherbound in harbour, we dropped badly behind our schedules. Then came a day when the crew who had taken an awful lot of punishment, refused to sail. Since we had 150 tons of apples in the hold bound for the Glasgow markets, Winston and I decided to take the *Earl Grey* to sea on our own.

"How fit are you?" I asked my brother. "Do you think you can stand twenty-four hours down below stoking this old tub to Glasgow?"

My brother and I are both six feet tall. He is always fit and has tremendous stamina, and from hard work a lot of muscle power.

"Anything you can do, I can do," was his answer.

"Good," I said, "then let's get going."

On that trip we battled with one of the worst winter gales I have ever met. In the huge seas the old *Earl Grey* felt as though giant sledge hammers were laying into her. Finally, when I turned her on her course, I had the full force of the gale and the tide behind me. With luck, I thought, we would make a record passage to Glasgow.

Winston came up on the bridge.

"How's she doing?" he asked.

"Fine," I told him, "she must be making nearly ten knots."

"Good," he laughed, "I've got a full head of steam. If I give the old girl any more, I'll blow the top off the boilers!"

It felt as though we were on a mighty switchback, as

roller after roller lifted our stern. Steering was hard work. The wind screamed behind us, lashing the seas into crazy, maddened horses. We were the jockeys riding them.

After eight hours, the wind dropped and the tide turned against us. Nothing that I could do seemed to keep the old ship on her course. For four hours she practically turned in circles. Finally, dog tired and weak with exhaustion I went down to the engine-room to see what was happening. The pressure gauge registered only seventy pounds of steam as against a normal hundred and twenty.

Winston was difficult to distinguish as he lay fast asleep on a heap of coal, stripped naked and as black as the coal around him.

I picked up a hunk of coal and threw it at him. He woke with a start.

"What the bloody hell do you think you're doing?" I shouted.

He got up and slowly came towards me, every muscle gleaming with sweat and oil.

"Who do you think you're talking to?" he said angrily.

For a moment it looked as though we were in for a fight. Then I looked at him again and was suddenly intensely proud of him.

"Come on," I said, "Let's get this old tub in. Then we'll both sleep our heads off. Here, have some tea and a few benzedrine".

"My dear brother!" Winston laughed, "if only our old father could see us now, he'd beat the hides off us!"

Then he started stoking again.

In the Clyde, I hoisted the pilot jack. When the pilot came aboard, he greeted me with a cheery: "Good morning. How about some grub and something to drink?"

"Shout down and tell the cook," I said.

He shouted and Win came out of the engine-room looking as though he had been born in Africa instead of Durham.

"Oh, Chief," said the pilot, "tell the cook to bring up some bacon and eggs for the skipper and me."

Winston looked at me and we both burst out laughing. We laughed until the tears were streaming down our faces, for we were both nearly hysterical. The poor pilot looked as though he thought we had gone off our heads. Finally, we told him that we were the only crew aboard.

After we had berthed alongside our unloading quay, Winston and I both lay on the deck and slept the sleep of the dead. But we were awakened by the dockers, who after hearing our story, insisted on sending a man to stoke the fires while we caught up on our sleep.

Business began to slacken off and I found that orders which had been placed with me were being cancelled. Then when one of my best customers cancelled his contract without giving any reason and switched over to the Irish Coastlines, I went to Belfast to find out what was happening.

I went to the Northern Ireland Parliament accompanied by one of the local town councillors, who was interested in the development of Newry as a port. I met various Ministers and under-secretaries. Their replies to my inquiries were all evasive. In the end, a Member took me aside and gave me what I considered to be the true reason for the cancellations of my contracts. Many Members of the Northern Government had private holdings in the Irish Coastlines and since I was taking 200 tons of freight a week from that company, obviously other small shipowners would follow my example. But there was another factor working against me—I was a

man with a "past", and some kind person had informed my agents and customers of the fact. Who this was, I never discovered. Probably the information came from the same source that thought fit to inform against me on the Gold Coast and, later, in Tangier.

I sold *Earl Grey* and returned to London.

There I met Lovell Penfold, an ex-fighter pilot, who was also looking round for something to do.

"I know where there is a single-engined Beachcraft plane up for sale," he told me. "The sellers want £3,500 for her and she's in perfect condition. Are you interested?"

"What opportunities are there for doing business with her?" I asked.

"There's a damned good market in 'Tangier for lobsters," Lovell told me. "You can buy them in Spanish Sahara for next to nothing and they fetch a pound a kilo in Tangier. We can use the plane to map out the quickest route and experiment to see if we can get the lobsters on the market, fresh. I have two other fellows interested, and if we can make it work, it's a good proposition," Lovell added.

After considering the matter carefully, I agreed to go in with Lovell, who introduced me to Duncan Watt, an ex-bomber pilot, and Paul Osborne. Then we all came to a working agreement and bought the Beachcraft. She was a nice job, single-engined with a top speed of 170 knots and a five-hour flying range. She could carry four passengers in addition to the pilot.

After a few minor repairs had been done to the radio, we made several flights to Paris, the Isle of Man and Dublin. A private plane has many advantages over the commercial air lines. It gives one freedom of movement. One can go and come as one likes—weather permitting.

Lovell was a pilot of considerable skill but, unfortunately, having flown Spitfires during the war, he always thought he was out strafing the enemy and enjoyed nothing better than skimming a few feet above the sea's surface or hedge-hopping across the countryside. Often when I was quietly sleeping in the back seat, he and Paul would surreptitiously switch off the petrol, the engine would stop and the plane rapidly lose height. Needless to say, this drastic treatment had the desired effect. It always woke me up!

Lovell had been wounded in the head during the war and, although this did not affect his flying skill, whenever we went out on a blind and he had drunk his quota, it worked on him in a strange way. He always wanted to fight. He is the only man I know who must have had at least a hundred brawls without winning any of them.

On one occasion having flown over to Paris, we were having a few drinks in the bar of the George Cinq Hotel. Next to us stood an American marine who looked about the toughest thing on two legs I have ever seen. Two cauliflower ears and a nose that spread all over his face showed that he must have had several opportunities of learning the noble art of self-defence. Such characters were as attractive to Lovell as honey to bees—why, Lovell alone knows! He himself, I should mention, was rather slightly built, fair-haired and had rather misleadingly mild blue eyes.

Lovell invited the Yank over. He was a nice, friendly guy who we found out was the light-heavyweight champion of one of the American fleets.

The drinks began to flow and I saw that dangerous twinkle appear in Lovell's eyes.

"Let's all go down and have a run round the pubs and clubs in Montmartre," he suggested.

Since I already had a rendezvous, I excused myself, so off Lovell went with his new-found friend.

At five o'clock in the morning, I received a telephone call from the police, asking me to go and see a friend of mine who was in hospital, badly hurt. That friend was Lovell.

At the hospital I found him propped up in bed in a public ward, smothered in bandages.

"What hit you?" I asked.

Apparently after leaving me, he had gone with his light-heavyweight pal, on a tour of all the bars, looking for trouble.

Into the first bar they went.

"Two large brandies," they shouted and then shot a challenging look round.

"Anyone want a fight?" Lovell asked.

One look at his bull-like companion and the bar quickly emptied.

From bar to bar they wandered, the brandies getting larger and larger, but still they could find no one to take them on.

Finally, they came to a little *bistro* that was packed to the doors. The Yank by this time was about ten sheets in the wind and Lovell was even tighter.

"Anybody wan' a fight?" he roared.

Lovell looked at the Yank.

"Why! You ugly-looking ape, I'll fight you!" he shouted.

"Man!" yelled the delighted marine, "You're a boy after my own heart!"

They went outside, stripped to the waist, and, cheered on by half of Pigalle, the slaughter was on.

As I looked at Lovell, I wondered if someone had hit him with a telephone booth. Both his eyes were

bunged up, his skull and nose were fractured and his left wrist broken. A few of his teeth were missing.

"What's the other bloke like?" I asked.

There was no need for him to answer, for at that moment in came his opponent. There was not a scratch on him.

"Gee, Bud," he said, "I'm mighty sorry!"

After Lovell's discharge from hospital, and just after the doctor had pronounced him fit, I made arrangements to meet him in "The Star", Kennedy's pub in Belgravia. I arrived early and found a crowd of friends there. The drinks were flowing fast. Two Canadian lumberjacks—brothers who had been born in England but who had migrated to Canada at a tender age—were holding court. They were huge men who had the look of being able to fell a tree without an axe. For years they had set their hearts on returning to the old country and, having saved enough money, they were now back and pushing out the boat in no uncertain manner. They had a luxurious flat in Park Lane and were handing out invitations to everyone to come to a party. Both of them were as ugly as sin. Carnera would have seemed an innocent babe in arms compared with those two.

As Lovell had not turned up, I left a message to say I was going to the party and suggested that he should join me.

The flat the Canadian boys had rented was sumptuous. The table was groaning under the weight of the bottles and food. Soon the party became hilarious. The boys and girls were still wining and dining when I left.

Lovell arrived fifteen minutes after I had gone—drunk.

One of the brothers came with a big smile and a big drink to welcome him.

"Good God," said Lovell, staring at him. "You're the ugliest looking bastard I've ever seen. They ought to stuff you and put you in a museum!"

The Canadian withdrew, hurt and somewhat baffled. He called his brother into a corner and whispered to him. The brother advanced towards Lovell.

"Holy mackerell!" the latter roared, "if I hadn't seen you, I would never have believed it. You're even uglier than the other so-and-so."

The two uncomely brothers retired into another room where, hearing laughter and merriment amongst their guests, they decided that they were being laughed at. As they were sensitive souls, they took off their coats in preparation to avenge their honour.

Lovell, finding that I had left, finished his drink and made his exit.

Then out came the two tree-choppers. They had a field-day and chopped all the males within sight.

Next day at the pub, it was reported to me, there were rows of boys sitting nursing black eyes, split ears and swollen jaws. The brothers from the backwoods had actually knocked out twenty of them—stone-cold.

Lovell sat in a corner, looking positively cherubic and sipping a whisky and soda.

At last we were all ready to go down to Tangier where we had decided to form a base for our operations. The distance from Tangier to Villa Cisneros, in Spanish Sahara, is some twelve hundred miles, and the flight is a hazardous one for a small plane not equipped for tropical flying.

But time was pressing, as we had heard that another business group had left two days before us, and was interested in the same proposition.

So in order not to hold up the venture, Paul and Lovell, in spite of the fact that the radio was still not working, decided to get started. We were giving a lift as far as Barcelona to a mutual friend who was bound for Madrid. So when we set off, the Beachcraft was carrying an overload of some 500 pounds and we all sat with our luggage piled in our laps. Such small details, however, did not worry any of us.

Duncan Watt sat in the back champing his teeth and obviously longing to get at the controls. However, his activities had been curtailed by a bad bomber crash that had left him with thirty-five compound fractures in his legs, so that he was at the mercy of a pair of sticks.

Sometimes, these sticks gave Duncan an unfair advantage over us, for whenever we misbehaved, he wielded them with the skill of an expert fencer. Since it was impossible to get near enough to clout him back, we bided our time until he was sitting on a bar-stool beside some pretty female, and then sneaked his sticks, leaving him roosting for a couple of hours.

The weather during the flight was fine until we came over the Pyrenees, when a violent electric storm came down blocking out all visibility. Lovell decided to try flying around the edge of the storm, but failed to find a break in the torrential downpour. The little plane bumped about badly.

Duncan and Paul were studying the chart.

"Here's a small airfield," said Duncan, pointing to a dot near Cape Creus.

We were only a few miles from it, so they decided to put down. But when we arrived at the supposed airfield, we could make out nothing but ploughed fields. Fruitlessly, we searched the area. Then, again, everyone consulted the charts. Twenty miles away, there was

another airfield. We altered course. Round and round we flew, seeing nothing but ploughed fields and vineyards below. Now the petrol was running low and the visibility becoming worse.

Paul had a brainwave. "I know a small private airport near Perpignan that I know is open," he said.

We flew along the coast until we made out a small landing strip. But someone had left a plane in the centre of the runway. After circling the field, we saw some figures come out of a shed and push the plane clear of the runway.

With a sigh of relief, we landed. When the boys checked the petrol, they found that we had only enough to last for another five minutes. I ribbed Paul and the other two unmercifully. Here we were with three experienced pilots aboard who had thousands of hours' flying time between them, and a mere five minutes stood between us and disaster!

We all spent the night in Perpignan and left the following day for Barcelona. Jack Cameron Brown, our passenger, shook hands with us and, after a drink, left for Madrid.

We refuelled and went to get into the plane. The Customs checked our manifest, and one of the officers asked: "Where is your other passenger?"

"He's gone through to Madrid," I told him.

"He's not allowed to do that. It is forbidden for any private plane to set down passengers in Spain." The officer went into a long explanation. I pointed out that Jack was already on his way to Madrid.

"Then you must bring him back" was the answer.

In vain we all in turn pleaded, threatened and used our charm. There was nothing to be done. Jack had to be brought back, otherwise our plane would not be allowed to leave.

"Will you all come and have a drink at the bar," I invited. The Customs officers accepted eagerly.

"Give us a couple of bottles of champagne," I told the barman.

Conversation was a little restricted owing to the language difficulty. An important Customs officer was our especial target. He wore a long row of medals.

"You must have seen a lot of fighting," Watt said.

"Si, si, señor. I fight for Franco many battles. We fight in Madrid, in Barcelona—" He launched into a sea of reminiscences. The champagne, I thought, was working wonders.

"Good man, Franco," we said. "Good soldiers the Spanish. Good Government. Nice place, Barcelona. Fine country." We were doing fine!

Lovell was beginning to get that glazed look in his eyes, that I knew meant trouble.

"I suppose you fought with the Blue Division for the Jerries," he asked.

"Blue Division, very good," chorused the four officials.

I coughed and kicked Lovell off his bar stool. Luckily he understood my meaning.

"Yes," he said. "Let's drink a toast. Here's to Franco. Here's to the Blue Division. Here's to the Nazis. May the whole lot get burnt!"

"Burnt?" asked the head man, "what does that mean?"

"Oh, it means Good Luck" said Paul, doing his best to look serious.

At what I thought was the right moment, I said to the chief: "You're a decent chap, why not do us a favour and sign our manifest and let us go?"

He drew himself up to his full height. "Señor," he said, "you are trying to bribe me."

His three friends looked suitably indignant.

"Of course not," I assured him, "but we have urgent business in Tangier."

He remained adamant. Then he bowed and left us, followed by his staff.

Sadly, we asked for the bill. When it came we had a shock. Lovell started to make a scene. "You lop-eared son of a highway robber," he shouted, "We didn't drink ten bottles of champagne!"

In the end, we had to bring the protesting Jack back from Madrid and carry him off with us to Tangier. There was nothing else we could do.

Although the radio was not working, this did not appear to hinder Lovell's flying, for he seemed to have the instinct of a homing pigeon. It never ceased to astonish me that, although he flew above cloud, he always knew where he was. Actually, his method of navigation was a simple one. He would make an estimated time of arrival at some point on the coast, then, five or six miles either to the north or south of his target, he would nose the plane down and cruise along the coast until he found some well-known river or town from which he could take a bearing. From Barcelona, we made for Malaga, dropped down low enough to see the grapes on the vines, and then climbed again and flew across the bleak rock of Gibraltar.

As we approached Tangier, we could see the hundreds of people sun-bathing on the beautiful golden sands. In fact, we flew in so low, that we scared some of them. Then we circled the town, picking up our airport bearing. Tangier is unfortunate in one respect. There is always a very strong Levanter blowing. As we flew in to land, a sudden gust dipped the plane on one side and we scraped in on one wing, the tip grating along the tarmac, before Lovell could right it. This caused the plane to swerve and it was only by violent braking that we did not end up in

a six-foot trench, which some Arab workman hurriedly vacated as they saw us bearing towards them.

"Christ!" Jack said. "The next time I decide to fly to Madrid, I'll go by boat!"

As we descended from the plane, Lovell was greeted by a cheery: "Hallo, you haven't improved at all! There's only one bastard who could make a landing like that and get away with it!"

"Johnny." Lovell grinned. "What the hell are you doing in Tangier?"

Lovell quickly introduced us to Johnny Welbeck, a fighter pilot who held a triple D.F.C.

"Well," said Johnny, "don't tell anyone, but you see that tub over there—I own it and we're flying gold from here to Paris. What are you doing with that old crate of yours?" he asked.

Lovell told him briefly why he had come.

"Don't tell me you're going to fly that across the Sahara!" Johnny laughed.

"I'll fly it to the North Pole if necessary and provided there's dough enough!" Lovell boasted.

We made our way through a curious crowd of Arabs, Spaniards and French who thronged the airport, into the bar, and soon Johnny was giving us a list of places to go.

"Is Mercedes still here?" Lovell asked.

"Sure," Johnny said. "She's still at the Black Cat, and was asking tenderly after you only yesterday. She's still the belle of the ball!"

"Great!" Lovell laughed. "Let's all meet up to-night at seven-thirty and have a real little binge round here. Then you can tell us all the propositions that are cooking."

We passed quickly through the Customs, grabbed a taxi and drove through the crowded colourful streets to the Isle de France, a small but extremely comfortable hotel.

As I signed the register, I noticed that Conan Doyle, the son of the famous Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was also staying there. He had arrived in Tangier on a big-game fishing expedition and had, I believe, succeeded in breaking several world records for big-game fish around the African coast.

After a bath and a shave, Lovell quickly took matters in hand. He had already rung up several of his friends inviting them to have drinks with us in the bar. Amongst the first to arrive was a dour little Scotsman, whose name was a legend along the coast—Captain MacBride. His ship, the *Ocean Rover*, a converted minesweeper, lay at anchor in the harbour, awaiting her turn to be laden with a cargo of contraband.

With MacBride were three Americans, who, later, were to become notorious when they were hunted for piracy on the High Seas. Their leader, a small, dapper American Jew, "Nylon" Sid Paley, was treated with the greatest deference by his two henchmen, Eliot Forest, a tall rugged Texan, who was reported to have been one of Luciano's body-guards, and his side-kick, Bud Elliot. The latter was a tough, raw-boned, ex-foreman of an oil pipe-laying gang who had deserted his job for the more lucrative business of illicit commerce in Tangier.

Paley, at that time, was organizing business for MacBride. Yet despite their reputation for toughness, it was the little, wizened Scotsman whose personality dwarfed his companions. MacBride, up to that moment, had probably run in more cargoes of contraband, amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds, than any man in the Mediterranean. Since he was an expert seaman with tremendous powers of invention, he never lost a ship or a cargo, and continually baffled the Customs as to his methods. He was always changing the shape of his craft,

so that by clever camouflage and painting the ship never looked the same.

Soon this amazing little man was giving me the low-down on how Tangier really existed.

"Mon," he said, "if it wasn't for us smugglers there would be no Tangier—everyone here would starve. There are no industries in this place, the country produces nothing, yet last year through this small port we had over 3,000,000 tons of shipping. In cigarettes alone we import a third of the total export of cigarettes from America. Every day, hundreds of tons leave the harbour. Six months ago, when some official busybodies decided to try to clean up the place, they told us they were going to order all our ships out of the harbour. We sent a delegation armed with all the facts and figures to the authorities. The plan was soon dropped. But you can bet your bottom dollar, if Tangier ceased to exist to-night, the Spaniards would be only too glad to give us all the necessary facilities to run from Ceuta."

We finished our drinks and our friends invited us to go for a run round the town.

"Not that it's anything of a town," said MacBride. "It's too filled with vice and sin."

This vice and sin to MacBride was quite a thing, for he himself was a strict Presbyterian, and led a most God-fearing life, which he shared with his whole family.

Outside, we piled ourselves into three luxurious Cadillacs, and soon were being presented to bar owners, hotel keepers as well as several of the high police officials and political administrators of this small but vastly fascinating town.

Over a drink in Dean's Bar, I told MacBride what we intended doing and said that either Paul or Lovell would be flying down to Villa Cisneros to make the first

trial run with the lobsters. Then, I asked him about the market possibilities for lobsters in Tangier, and he rang up a friend who was a restaurateur and asked him along. This friend told me that he would be prepared to distribute from Tangier and could handle up to two tons of lobsters a week, for which he would pay me an all-in price of £1 a kilo.

I was naturally delighted with this news that meant that my market was already established. The restaurateur, however, told me that four days previously he had been contacted by another group with the same proposition and that they had already flown down to Villa Cisneros. He added that in the event of this group returning with lobsters, he would not be able to handle any further consignments.

Paul, Duncan and I decided that speed was now an essential factor in this operation and, if possible, Paul must leave the next morning to establish trade relations, and find out the snags of the transport and refuelling. Paul was keen to fly the plane, although the trip was fraught with endless difficulties, mainly due to the fact that the radio was not working, which meant he would be flying by dead reckoning the whole time. There was, too, a bad point that we had noticed about the Beachcraft while flying into Tangier, which was that the oil pressure rose very sharply in the tropical heat and was always wavering around the danger mark. It was too late to do anything about this now and, although we had arranged for the radio parts to be flown down to Tangier, we felt that Paul should take a chance.

We planned that next morning we would go out to the airport, remove the back seats and make as much storage space as possible in the plane so that Paul could bring back his first trial shipment. We also discussed the

various details of his route, and he decided to fly hugging the coast the whole way. On inquiry we found that it was possible for him to refuel at Agadir. We were warned about the nature of the country and told that the rules insisted that on such a trip, a rifle, thirty rounds of ammunition, water for seven days and food enough for three should be carried in the plane. But as we had no means of coming by a rifle so late in the day, Paul made up his mind to fly with the food and the water.

While we were talking things over in Dean's Bar, in came two tall, dignified Arabs in European dress. One of them was young and good-looking and was introduced as Hamza Abanini. I was told that he was the son of the Khedive and the nephew of the Grand Vizier of Morocco. He and I soon became engrossed in the conditions in Morocco, and he invited me to meet his father at dinner the following evening.

Dean, of Dean's Bar, is a colourful personality. Half West-Indian, half English, he gathers round him the *élite* of the cosmopolitan crowd that lives or passes through Tangier. He was on friendly terms with Barbara Hutton and also poor Freddie McAvoy, the playboy who later mysteriously lost his life when his yacht was wrecked off the African coast.

There was a great air of opulence about Tangier at this particular time. The smugglers were making huge fortunes. Everyone seemed to own expensive cars. Beautifully dressed women, with magnificent jewellery, flitted in and out of the bars like glorious butterflies. The city was not only rich, but bad. It catered for every form of vice and perversion. Even while sitting in the smartest bars, one was pestered by Arab touts offering one their sisters and brothers and suggesting a tour of the lurid *bordels* littering the Petit Socco.

Johnny Welbeck turned up and we all went on a tour of the Arab quarter. In every bar there was a sprinkling of tarts, who seemed to descend upon Tangier in their hundreds. In quite a few of the bars the price of a woman was the same as the price of a glass of whisky, and the sailors visiting the bars bought both with equal voracity.

At one bar, Watt became engrossed in conversation with the pretty barmaid. He had left his sticks leaning against the counter, and the moment his back was turned, I signalled to Lovell who lifted his sticks and tucked them under his arm.

We shot out into the street, leaving Watt helpless on his stool. Then we continued our tour and not until we had been gone for an hour did we remember about Watt. As we made our way back, we heard a terrible clatter. Watt, tired of being stranded, was stumping up the Socco, using two bar stools as crutches, followed by a protesting Madame and a swarm of Arabs. We rescued him from his predicament, but not before we had received a full chastisement at the end of his flying sticks.

Next door to the Isle de France, was a neat little bar, run by an American, called "Johnny-the-One". Johnny had been working at a construction camp in Morocco for an American company, and having saved a few dollars, did what half the population of Tangier seemed to do—opened a bar. He had also taken a stretch of the beach and installed a little restaurant with bathing huts attached. The American dainties he cooked there were delicious. While we were talking to him, a huge American marine came into the bar. Johnny turned to MacBride's son, Don, and said: "I have somebody to take up your challenge for a hand-pressing competition. We are ready to bet 100 dollars that he can beat you."

The American was presented to Don. They shook

hands, sat down at a table, rolled up their sleeves and, placing their forearms on the table, began their trial of strength.

A hand-pressing competition is a combination of both strength and skill. The two contestants are not allowed to take their elbows off the table, and the contest goes on until one or the other has the back of his hand pressed flat on the table.

Old MacBride was as excited as a schoolboy and chuckling to himself with glee. He pulled me to one side.

"If you can get any of these Yanks to have a bet," he whispered, "back my boy. He'll win."

As the bar was crowded with American construction engineers as well as tough seamen, we started to cheer for Don. One little Yank in a lumber-jacket shouted out: "Who wants to bet fifty dollars amongst you Limeys?"

I took his bet. Instantly, there was a chorus from the rest of the Yankees. Altogether, our little party laid five hundred dollars on Don, to win.

The excitement rose as the test developed. Don, before he left Scotland, had been a champion caber thrower and had enormous strength in his stocky forearms. Since the marine, apparently, had been an all-in wrestler, weight for weight, both boys were evenly matched.

There came a quick push as the American tried to surprise Don. But the latter's arm remained absolutely like a rock. For fully fifteen minutes pressure was exerted, first one way, then the other. Each time our man seemed to have an advantage, we cheered him on.

"Atta boy!" shouted the Americans, when their fellow looked like gaining a slight advantage. "Press him down!"

The beads of sweat mounted on the American's forehead. Don clenched his teeth, drew his breath in and,

with a tremendous effort of strength, inch by inch forced his opponent's hand flat on to the table. There was a dismayed groan from the Americans. We whooped with jubilation, collected the money and soon the champagne was flowing.

Lovell, who had been partaking of his usual quota, looked across at one of the Americans, and said: "Jesus! That's easy. I'll take you on for twenty dollars."

The huge American was delighted. As soon as they sat down at the table, the American pressed Lovell's hand flat, without the slightest effort. Lovell was furious.

"It's a trick," he yelled.

I could discern an angry look in the Yank's eye, so I hastily intervened before Lovell started his smashing tactics and had us all slung out of the bar. We bade adieu to our new friends and went home to bed.

Next morning, bright and early, we left for the airport. On arrival, we took out the back seats of the Beachcraft and cleared out the luggage compartment. Everything that we found unnecessary in the plane, including the co-pilot's seat, was removed. Then we produced a couple of cases of Vichy water and some tins of food. Paul climbed into the pilot's seat and with a cheery, "I'll be seeing you," up he went on his long and arduous journey, with as much *sangfroid* as I had seen him display when leaving London on a flip down to the Isle of Wight.

"I hope he'll be all right," I said to Lovell, who had been instructing him on the way down in the art of flying the Beach.

"Don't worry about him," Lovell laughed. "He's a wonderful natural flier. If I'd had any misgivings about him, I'd have insisted on making the trip myself."

When we got back to the hotel, I started chatting with Duncan Watt about the amusements in Tangier, because,

apart from bars and night clubs, there was a dearth of cinemas and sporting facilities. In the centre of the town there was an extremely good sports arena that was used only on rare occasions.

"Why don't we start a dog track there?" I suggested to Duncan. "We could import dogs from England, form a syndicate and go into operation."

"I don't know if there is anything in the by-laws against gambling," he said. "I know there are two casinos operating here, but the Moslems are not allowed to enter them. We can get all the necessary information from the Mendoub, who is responsible for the laws."

As we had some four or five days to await Paul's return, I decided that this might prove a profitable venture and set out to explore its possibilities. Duncan Watt was mixed up with a local building scheme, and so the pair of us were kept busy. On the fifth day, when Paul had not returned, we began to feel worried. However, we made inquiries at the airport and found that no plane had been reported missing. With this news we had to be content.

On several occasions I had dinner with the Abaninis, and Hamza, the son, impressed me favourably. He was a fervent Arab Nationalist and a devout Mohammedan—his only lapse from the faith being the occasional drink he allowed himself. He, with a group of other young Arabs, was desperately trying to raise the status of his fellow-countrymen by continually badgering the French and the Spaniards with requests to start all manner of industrial and building programmes. But they had achieved practically nothing, and Hamza told me that even at this stage, Morocco was seething up to a point of revolt that must inevitably break out.

Often during the day, Watt and I would make trips down

the Petit Socco, for this quarter had a ceaseless fascination for me. At the top of the Socco, one walks through a lane of money-changers, where one can buy any currency in the world, as well as gold bars and coins from various countries at the current market prices. A lot of this gold is used as a means of exchange between smugglers. Moreover, here in Tangier, the currency restrictions did not seem to apply to any of the English visitors, who appeared to set the spending pace, out-doing even the Americans!

At the end of the seventh day, we received a call from the airport that Paul had radioed from Casablanca and was returning that afternoon. We were all on the tarmac eagerly awaiting his arrival, and when we saw the little blue spot of the plane in the distance, we heaved sighs of relief. Paul soon taxied up in front of the airport offices and clambered out, looking very tired and dusty. The inside of the Beachcraft was empty and everything was covered in fine sand.

We took him into the bar and over a drink he told us his story. "One of the main troubles going down," he said, "was that I couldn't get any height in the Beach, due to the intense reflected heat from the desert. The moment I started to climb above 300 feet, up went the oil temperature over the danger mark." His eyes were terribly swollen from the glare of the blazing sun. After leaving Agadir, he ran into trouble. A thirty mile an hour head wind sprang up, and, not having a radio and flying low, he found it practically impossible to pick up a bearing. Hour after hour he had flown on until finally he estimated that he was approaching Villa Cisneros, only to find himself with the endless Atlantic on one side and the desert on the other. Full of the doubts that a lone flier has at such times, he began to think that due to sun-blindness,

he had overflowed his destination. He considered turning back in his tracks, but realized that if he did, and if he had made a mistake, and had to make a forced landing, it would probably be the end of the plane and himself. So he pressed on. Finally, two hours after his estimated time of arrival, with his petrol running low, he touched down at Villa Cisneros.

There Paul ran into further trouble, for as time had been so pressing, he had not bothered to obtain a visa from the Spaniards. The chief of the Militia, who was in charge of the outpost, treated him with the greatest courtesy. Paul said that this man had been decorated by practically every country in the world for desert rescues.

When Paul explained the nature of his visit, the chief said: "I think that you are perhaps a little late, for three days ago a party of Frenchmen arrived on a similar mission to your own. The lobster fishing rights are owned solely by one family, which I believe has now signed to deliver the whole of their catch to the French."

The chief's news proved absolutely correct, and, although Paul borrowed a jeep from the kindly Militia, and visited the lobster fishers, he discovered that the French had already bought the whole of their catch for that year.

When we heard this story, we were naturally disappointed for we had built up high hopes for this venture. Back in the hotel in Tangier we had a quick conference, after which Paul and Duncan decided to return to London, leaving the Beachcraft with Lovell and myself to see if there was any other business we could do. The Americans were building air bases all over Morocco and one of Paul's ideas was to start a charter service to carry their personnel between the main towns and their outlying bases.

As soon as Paul and Duncan had left, Lovell and I started looking for business. When we ran into Johnny Welbeck, he came up with a bright suggestion.

"There is a 10 per cent. profit on gold between Tangier and Casablanca," he told us, "and my syndicate would be prepared to pay you £1,000 a trip."

"How much do we carry?" I asked Johnny.

"Your consignment would be worth at least £50,000," he reckoned. "You will be given a rendezvous north of Casablanca on the main highway. Your gold will be boxed and padded. It's a night-flying operation. When you see the signal from the car headlights, you fly low over the car and drop the gold. Are you interested?" he asked.

"When do we start?" I asked him.

"You can make a trip to-morrow night, if you like," Johnny said.

After poring over maps with Lovell, we decided upon a rendezvous point. Johnny then called up his principals telling them that we had accepted the proposition and would be ready to fly next evening. Then he explained that there was a small export duty on gold leaving Tangier. "If you can get the gold on the plane without paying the duty," he said, "then we split the difference with you."

I said: "All right, I'll try. I'm sure it's perfectly easy."

The next evening we met Johnny with his two principals, who handed over to us two boxes containing gold. They were heavy and packed round with rubber fabric such as we used when dropping articles into the occupied zones during the war.

When we came within half a mile of the airport, I stopped the car and with Lovell, carrying one load of

gold and myself the other, we set off down the side of a field near to the hangar where our plane was housed. Sixty yards from the hangar, I put down the gold, telling Lovell to lie quiet. Then I crept alongside the tarmac to the hangar, reached the gates, and, with the aid of a screwdriver, took off the lock. No one was guarding the hangar yet every creak of the doors seemed amplified a thousand times. . . . I carefully opened the door of the Beachcraft and, leaving everything in readiness, crept out. Two patrolling Arab watchmen approached and made a large circle of the hangar. Crouched in the bushes, they did not pick me out.

I made my way back to Lovell. "Don't make a noise, creep quietly behind me," I whispered.

We half crawled to the hangar doors and deposited the gold in a little compartment behind the passenger seat. So far so good! I crept out again, refastened the lock, putting the screws back into position. Then, returning to the mainroad, we walked up to the airport. Lovell and I pretended to recognize Johnny for the first time. We went into the bar and had a drink together. I whispered to the two principals that their gold was safely aboard the Beachcraft and that we were ready to take off. Lovell went to the Airport Control and told them that he was doing a practice night flight and that he would probably be gone some two or three hours. He explained that we were not landing anywhere but merely on a joyride. We received our take-off permission and with one of the Customs officers in attendance, armed with the keys of the hangar, we went over to the plane. The Customs officer held open the Beachcraft door while we climbed in. We taxied on to the runway and Lovell received the necessary permission to take off. He took the plane to 7,300 feet.

As we approached the target areas, Lovell brought the Beachcraft into a dive and with the aid of the brilliant Mediterranean moon, quickly found his bearings. As we flew along the main highway to Casablanca with our navigation lights extinguished, we could clearly see the on-coming cars along the road. We flew along the road at no more than 300 feet, travelling at some 160 m.p.h.

"There it is!" Lovell shouted.

Sure enough, parked at the side of the road we could make out a car flickering its head-lights. We circled once over the car and got a green flash that was the signal to drop. I reached down behind me, grabbed the box of gold, but found that forcing the door open was difficult. Moreover, the suction of the slip-stream nearly dragged me out of the plane. By dint of curling a foot round the seat stanchions I held on.

On our first approach Lovell zoomed down over the car and I let my first package go. Quickly we turned. On the second run, Lovell roared over the car at between twenty-five and thirty feet, and again I forced the door open. I could see two figures waving to us as I threw out the package. It hit the top of the car with a terrific crack, bounced off the roof and struck one of the men in the road. He lay spread-eagled on the ground.

Lovell shouted: "Christ! you shouldn't have killed the bastard—we might need him."

With a zoom, he put the Beachcraft at full throttle and sped back to Tangier. Without further incident, we landed. For the look of the thing we took the plane up again for two or three practice landings, then taxied to the hangar and went back to the bar. Johnny and his two friends looked a little anxious. I told them that everything had gone according to plan, but that probably one

of their staff was badly hurt. The fact did not seem to worry them unduly: "So long as the gold is there," they said, "we can always get men!"

Back in our hotel that evening, I had the pleasure of receiving my first £1,000, and later that night Lovell and I had a large celebration down the Petit Socco that ended in Lovell taking another unmerciful battering from a gang of Swedish sailors.

Lovell and I spent the next three months working regularly for Johnny's syndicate. Each time we made a run, our rendezvous was changed. Sometimes we flew over to Spain. On two occasions the night flying was varied to daylight operations. Once we dropped our valuable cargo near a yacht outside Malaga in floating containers, and although this operation was seen by several fishing boats, the policy of "mind your own business—hear nothing and see nothing" worked very well, for we were never worried by either the police or the Customs.

Johnny flew regularly once a week to Paris with a mixed consignment of gold and diamonds, which I think must have robbed the French Customs of millions of francs. He was always cheerful during these trips, and seemed to take them in the normal line of business. There were probably six planes operating at this time from Tangier, some flying as far as the Middle East. It was only when the gold markets of the world bounced up that this lucrative business came to an end.

The Beachcraft needed a certificate of air-worthiness so Lovell and I reluctantly left Tangier and flew back home.

In England, when the engineers inspected the Beachcraft, the surveyor told us it would be necessary to renew all rivets and that several modifications in the design had

to be made. The total work would take at least a month or more to do. Lovell, meanwhile, had received an offer of a job flying for the Malayan Air Force and was anxious to take part in yet another war. So I reluctantly bade him a fond adieu, and settled down once again to enjoy the delights of the West End fleshpots.

PART TWO
The Empire Builder

ONE DAY, while I was in the flat I had recently taken in Sloane Square, Ken Hill telephoned to me.

"I have some people here from the Gold Coast," he said. "One of them is the personal representative of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the famous coloured leader. Can I bring them along to see you? The meeting may develop into something of interest for you."

I felt a thrill of excitement, for, ever since I was a child, I had avidly read every book I could find about Central Africa and for years I had dreamt of going there. Now, too, the papers were full of stories of the growing independence of the Gold Coast and the great African Experiment. It could be profitable. The Gold Coast had already won a measure of independence that had kindled the fires of hope in the hearts of millions of its people; hope of being freed from a life of serfdom and near slavery. I also had some hopes of my own.

"Bring your friends around," I told Ken.

After half an hour he arrived with two Africans and a West Indian. The first to be introduced to me was Joe Appiah, who later married Peggy Cripps, the late Sir Stafford Cripps' daughter. The other African was George Padmore, the famous negro writer and close personal friend of Dr. Nkrumah. The West Indian was a friend of Mr. Padmore's.

Joe Appiah is an Ashanti and typical of his race;

proud, a great reasoner, a ready friend, but quick to take offence. The Ashantis are the "smoked Irish" of the Gold Coast. They like nothing better than a good, political argument. At the same time, they are fine organizers and the majority of the major revolutions of the past originated with them. Joe Appiah is small in stature, with a pair of large, shrewd eyes and shining white teeth, and is an intensely interesting and lively talker. Life with him can never be boring.

George Padmore, who has spent his life fighting for the betterment of the coloured races, is an embittered man; quieter and more profound than Joe. He seems to weigh each thought and to consider every word before delivering it with a certain effort.

I made my most intelligent and statesmanlike face.

Joe opened the conversation.

"My country is in the midst of a political and social revolution," he said. "It is our firm intention to introduce wide reforms. To that end we have tremendous schemes to raise the standard of living on the Gold Coast. We are building roads, railways and harbours. Our drive for education has created a need for schools and colleges. Our people want houses—good houses, with proper sanitation so that we can eliminate disease. We have a country rich in material things and spiritually strong. With the will of the people and our own physical and mental strength, we're certain to succeed."

Then George Padmore took over the conversation.

"One of our major problems, Mr. Chapman, is the lethargy with which most of the established civil servants treat our people," he said fiercely. "They think that anything is good enough for the African. Amongst themselves, they say: 'Oh, the African is content to run around the Bush like an animal—so let us keep him like

that.' But that is, of course, a complete fallacy. The coloured peoples to-day, all over the world, know that if they are to survive they must compete on equal terms with the white man. Otherwise, we are doomed to lead a miserable life of serfdom and remain subservient to the Great White Masters!"

George stated the case quietly but firmly, and I looked impressed.

"How can I help?" I asked.

"One of our leaders," said Joe, "has a plan, which we all support, to introduce competition—trade competition—to the Gold Coast. For too long British firms have had a closed shop there. All contracts for the Government are passed through the Colonial Office in London and, inevitably, when tenders are made, the contract is given to a British firm, regardless of whether or not that firm is better or cheaper than, say, a foreign firm. At this moment, we have a number of major contracts, amounting to millions of pounds, for which we would like good companies of international repute to compete on a fair basis with Britain. Do you think," he asked, "that you know of any firm that would be interested?"

"That," I answered, "rather depends on what the contracts are for. For instance, there is a firm in Holland, called Schokbeton. They have a great reputation for constructing prefabricated houses. I have seen samples of their work in Tangier and know that they have contracts in many parts of the world, including Pakistan and East Africa. They turn out all kinds of buildings—schools, hospitals and so on. Their erection time is quick and, I believe, their prices are competitive with those of any other country. If you like," I added, "I will contact them and find out if they are interested."

With a song in my heart I nipped round to Duncan Watt,

who was representing Schokbeton in various parts of the world, and gave him the glad tidings. Duncan agreed that we should fly to Sliedrecht, in Holland, for talks with the managing director of Schokbeton, Mr. Leeuwrick, and his colleagues.

The Dutch may have the reputation for being somewhat phlegmatic, but they certainly showed a keen interest in our proposition. At the conclusion of our meeting, they appointed me as their representative on the Gold Coast, agreed to pay me £150 a month and provide me with a car. I was to receive a commission of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The Schokbeton factory was impressive. It turned out complete elements for all kinds of minor and major construction work, and was principally concerned with the concrete "shocking" system. This is done by placing the concrete in moulds on long tables that are vibrated by electric motors. The finished concrete is of firm quality in addition to being three and half times as strong as concrete mixed and poured in the normal way.

The basic idea for these elements was to transport them to building sites and erect them quickly with the aid of a crane. This, and the fact that everything down to the smallest detail was planned in the factory, brought about a great saving in manpower. One of these prefabricated houses could be set up by seven men and ready for occupation in a week. A block of forty flats, once its foundations had been laid, could be built by sixteen men in less than a week.

I travelled for several days about Holland, learning everything I could concerning the construction of various types of buildings. The firm were extremely helpful and, after a few days, I had a passable knowledge of the rudiments of their work. In all, Schokbeton had three

factories; one in Kampen, one in Zeist and the last in Sliedrecht. These produced some 2,000 tons of concrete elements a week, under contract to the Dutch, British, French and several other Governments.

The directors agreed to provide me with a full-length film, showing the various methods of construction, which would be invaluable when demonstrating the system to the African Government. Finally, the managing director and the export manager, Mr. Leeuwrick and Mr. Palthe, of Schokbeton, both agreed to come down to the Gold Coast for a week to help me.

I returned to London and gravely reported to Joe Appiah that the Dutch firm was interested in the Gold Coast development scheme and had extended him an invitation to pay them a visit, so that he could report personally to his Government. He accepted this invitation.

At last, after several weeks, all my preparations were made, and the two Dutchmen and myself left London Airport bound for Accra, the capital of the Gold Coast. We flew via Tripoli, Kano and Lagos.

At Kano, I made my first contact with Central Africa and its natives. It was blazing hot when we climbed down from the air liner. I saw vultures for the first time, sitting on the roof of the airport restaurant. Lizards were sunning themselves, waiting for unwary flies, fascinating to observe as the bright-coloured males with their blue bodies and pink heads chased the rather drab-looking females.

The gardens of the airport were a riot of brilliant tropical flowers. House traders, in their flowing white robes and red tarbooshes, were doing a roaring trade in bric-à-brac—handworked crocodile-skin bags, snake-skins, bracelets carved in ivory, cheapjack jewellery,

obviously made in Birmingham, but that they vowed was "Sudan Antique", and ostrich eggs bound with gay-coloured leather. "Master, you buy! Master, very cheap!"

We had a quick meal and took off again for Lagos and Accra. The airport at the latter was built by the British and greatly enlarged by the Americans during the war. It is to-day capable of handling the heaviest aircraft and coping with as much traffic as London Airport or La Guardia.

The first thing that I noticed when we touched down were the people. They all had happy, smiling faces and looked as if they were really enjoying life. From the barriers, they stood in their hundreds, waving to the plane. They were dressed in all the colours of the rainbow. Several of the men and women wore the beautiful native dress, known as Kanti cloth. The women carried their babies on their backs.

All the Customs and immigration officials were African and wore uniforms similar to the London police, but with blue shorts instead of trousers. They did their work with extreme thoroughness, checking visas and inoculation certificates, and dealing with any illiterate with kindness, filling in the necessary forms themselves. They all spoke English as well as three or four of the African languages.

Porters collected our bags and led us to the hotel that lay some fifty yards from the airport. It was a wooden building and, despite a verandah decorated with tropical plants and flowers, it had a familiar appearance.

I had sent a cable asking the manager to reserve three suites for our party. At the reception desk were two clerks, pens and pencils stuck through their woolly hair. One of them spoke perfect English.

"I have reserved three suites by cable," I told him.

"Yes, sir, just a moment," he smiled.

He went into an office and reappeared with the manager, a stockily-built, cheerful Cockney, called Bill Kaye, who, I later learned, had spent fifteen years of his life on the west coast of Africa. He ran the whole of the Lisbon Hotel with no European staff and it was a model of efficiency. He himself had trained the clerks, cooks, barmen and waiters, and his good humour and energy were inexhaustible. He would take Africans straight from the Bush who had never entered a civilized home and in a matter of months they were waiting at table, answering the telephone and generally working behind the reception desk.

"My name is Chapman. I reserved three Suites," I told Bill.

"Oh, yes," he said, "we got your cable, sir." Then he shouted to a fuzzy-haired boy in a white uniform. "Take these gentlemen to their suites."

We followed the boy out of the main building to a large wooden bungalow the entire front of which was covered with mosquito netting. Leeuwrick and Palthe looked puzzled. Then the truth dawned on me. The bungalow was part of old Army transit quarters. Our suites consisted of three rooms—one for each of us—10 ft. by 10 ft.

Leeuwrick said: "We ordered suites, there must be some mistake."

Two heads popped out from neighbouring rooms.

"If you guys can get a suite anywhere on the Gold Coast, reserve two for us!" The speaker was an American. We introduced ourselves to him and his companion, who soon enlightened us. There were no hotels in Accra that could be compared with any in Europe.

"This is Bush country," said one. "This hotel—or barracks—is luxury to what you will run into when you start travelling."

There was nothing to be done, so we installed ourselves. We were in Africa.

Later, in the bar. Bill Kaye asked us if the suites were to our satisfaction, and we all had a good laugh, followed by drinks.

Grouped round the bar were a collection of Air Force crews and a number of types dressed in shorts, some of them wearing long-sleeved shirts and ties. This, we learnt later, was the usual garb for Government officials. Why, I do not know, but when one pays a visit to a Government office, one is expected to wear a tie. This sacred custom is adopted even by the Africans.

One magnificent African came into the bar wearing a beautiful Kanti cloth, woven in gold and green. Like many produced in the Northern Territories, his garment was woven into intricate patterns and probably cost £100 or more. He came across to where we were standing.

"Are you the Schokbeton representatives?" he asked. I told him that we were.

"Well my name is Krobo Edusei. I am the Government Chief Whip. I was supposed to meet you at the airport, but unfortunately we were in the middle of a debate at the Legislative Assembly. I have only just managed to get away. Please accept my apologies," he smiled.

Edusei was an Ashanti and a powerful figure in the Government. He was a small man, but what he lacked in stature, he made up for in courage. It was he who had led the Ashantis to revolt when the Peoples' Party had declared positive action. Then the Ashantis had swept through Kumasi, burning and looting, and Krobo and

several of his compatriots were caught and sent to jail. When a General Election had been declared on the Gold Coast, he had been returned with a huge majority. His control over the warlike Ashantis was remarkable, and in terms of popularity, he came second only to their then leader, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Krobo made a marked impression on all of us and soon we were enjoying his unexpected wit. Whenever he made a point, his face lit up with delight and his teeth sparkled in a broad smile. Then he clapped his hands with glee and set everybody laughing, including the African barmen and waiters, at whom he continually made cracks.

He took us in his car for a tour of Accra and the first thing that caught my eye as we left the hotel was the high standard of the bungalows along the roadside. To the left of the Ring Road, huge bungalows and flats were under construction. Krobo told us that these were intended for Ministers and high Government officials. He said, however, that members of the Government had refused to live in them because they thought they were too luxurious and would lead them away from the people who had put them in office.

The main road and the roads leading to the cantonments, the European quarter of Accra, were all good. The bungalows lining them, each with its separate plot of ground, were immaculate. I saw for the first time bananas, pineapples, paw-paws and mangoes growing and decided that this part of Accra would have done credit to any European city. Silently I wondered where the term "White Man's Grave" came from, for the climate, although humid, was not unpleasant. No worse, in fact, than I had experienced in the South of France in mid-summer.

En route, we passed parties of natives working and

going about their business. Many of them spotted the C.P.P. standard which Krobo flew on his car, and waved and called out greetings. A group of schoolboys and girls shouted: "Freedom! Freedom!" the cry I was to hear so often, for it was the slogan of the people and often took the place of "good morning" or "good night".

From the European quarter we drove into the town. The standard of building immediately declined. Many of the houses were made of mud and had tin roofs. Outside them sat groups of Mammies. The Mammy is the greatest private trader on the Gold Coast. She is usually middle-aged and it is she and her sisters who buy in bulk from the United Africa Company those commodities that the natives need, for the stores will not sell to Africans in small quantities. Consequently, the Mammies buy in this way and make large profits re-selling their goods to the natives, as often as not outside the very store from which they have bought their goods. From their little stalls, usually old beer crates, they sell bread, sardines, cloth, salt and beer; in fact, everything and anything. They constitute one of the main problems of the country, for their huge profits come chiefly from the pockets of the poor.

The people of the Gold Coast spend most of their lives out of doors. They sit about in groups gossiping, while their children run around just as God made them—in the nude.

Crowds of natives were out shopping as we drove by. Everything they had bought they carried on their heads, while many of the women also carried a baby, slung on their backs. Schoolchildren carried exercise books and even bottles of ink, perfectly balanced on the top of their heads. Perhaps this habit accounts for all the women having beautiful figures, straight backs and graceful movements.

At various points, there were public water taps, where queues formed to fill up an odd assortment of vessels with water. Several naked boys and girls washed themselves, lathered in white foam and gaily splashing one another, to be chastised occasionally by their elders.

We stopped at a point where a crowd was gathered round some of the famous "talking" drums. Men and women were clapping their hands to the exciting rhythm. Several were executing the intricate movements of a dance. At the slightest provocation, these drums are produced—to celebrate births, deaths and marriages or any other event offering an excuse for festivity. Nearly everyone in Africa can play a drum. I know of nothing more thrilling than to hear hundreds of these drums beating out the old war songs and challenges.

The centre of Accra is badly laid out. The streets are narrow and pavements, as we know them, are almost non-existent. Street traders overflow into the road so that driving and walking are a dangerous business. The air is made hideous with the blare of motor hooters, horns and bicycle bells.

Near the market we saw several Mammy wagons, which are the chief means of transport on the west coast. They are ordinary lorries with wooden seats, open at the sides and with a tarpaulin covering the roof. They travel long distances on the bad roads at breakneck speeds, crammed with passengers who think nothing of bringing a few chickens, a sheep or a goat with them to sell in the market. The first wagon we saw was typical enough, crowded with people, one of whom was playing a drum while the others banged cymbals. On the backs of some of these wagons, amusing slogans were written—"Never Trust A Woman", "Prepare To Meet Thy God", "He Who Overtakes, Undertakes", being examples.

The town of Accra itself is a hotch-potch of shops owned by Indian, Syrian, Lebanese, European and African traders, all of whom compete in an extremely lucrative market. The shops themselves are usually on one floor, where the wares are all laid out so that one can walk in and look them over. The African loves to bargain, and most of the trade is done in Eastern fashion—everyone trying to get as much as he can for his goods, while the customer strives to hand over as little money as possible.

From a few shops came rival strains of the latest song-hits to add to the general clamour. But no one minded the noise.

A few women sat about feeding their infants at the breast, I swallowed at first, but the African lives close to Nature and has none of the inhibitions of the so-called civilized races. Some of the women wore their native dresses hanging round their waists and looked both handsome and cool.

One of the worst features of Accra is the drainage system—if one could call it that! The drains are about 2 ft. deep, open and always stinking. They must be a definite cause of disease, for often they are choked with dirt and refuse thrown into them mostly by the street traders, so that they flood and overflow into the street.

We drove past the Legislative Assembly building and the Law Courts, which are two of the town's finest buildings. We saw the the prison at Jamestown that stands facing out to sea. A party of prisoners returning from work, wearing khaki shorts, looked smilingly happy.

Many of the houses we saw in Jamestown were very poor, for the district is little more than an overcrowded shanty town, consisting mostly of mud huts. Its people are, for the most part, fisherfolk, and for a while we watched them repairing their nets with amazing dexterity.

Krobo was a mine of information. Whenever we

stopped, he would be greeted by the town inhabitants and he would present us to them. It is difficult to estimate the population of Accra, but I would say that it numbers 200,000, of which some 3,000 are Europeans and about 1,500 Indian, Syrian and Lebanese merchants. The Africans refused to co-operate in 1908 when the Government tried to take a census, on the grounds that they did not like to be counted like sheep. The people also thought that if they admitted to the true number living in their houses, they would be subjected to some form of tax and conscription. So they gave the authorities the wrong answers.

As we drove through Jamestown, every house seemed to be surrounded with steaming cooking pots and a delicious smell of food rose into the air.

Since we had no business appointments until Monday, and as it was now Saturday, Krobo gave us all an invitation to go that evening to the Rodger Club, which was the main all-African Club.

We drove back to the Lisbon Hotel to change, and while waiting in the bar for Krobo to call for us, met several of the local European tradesmen with whom we had a few drinks. One of them was the manager of a large store in Accra, and he told us of how, when he had first come to the Gold Coast, his job had been selling refrigerators. One day, when he was demonstrating how these machines worked, into the store came an African chief from Batanga, who was completely illiterate and spoke no English. He was, however, impressed with the refrigerators and conveyed that he wished to buy two. Having paid cash for them, he loaded them on to a Mammy wagon and set off on the long, arduous journey across miles of Bush country and over dirt roads, full of potholes, back to his own country.

When he came to his village, he ordered his tribe to bring meat and various other delicacies. The drums were brought out, a feast proclaimed, and the chief explained to his people the new white man's magic—how food could be kept and drinks made cold. Then the whole tribe sat on their backsides round the two refrigerators while the food went rotten, for there was no electricity within hundreds of miles of the village.

Puzzled, the chief returned to Accra and explained politely that the two refrigerators would not work. Due to the language difficulty, the salesman failed to understand what was the matter, so he looked at the machines and saw that they had no plugs. He sold him the plugs and fitted them to the wires. Delighted, the chief journeyed home once more. Again the drums were beaten and a feast arranged. Again, the whole tribe sat round and waited for the miracle to happen.

The meat went bad. Then the chief loaded the offending refrigerators on to his Mammy wagon and brought them back the hundreds of miles to Accra. This time the salesman realized that there was no electricity in the chief's village. In order to explain the mysteries of the element, he took his customer to the Accra generating plant. When the chief saw the huge dynamos, he shook his head sadly and explained through an interpreter that he considered it not worth while to buy such vast quantities of machinery just to preserve meat and enjoy a cool drink.

Krobo was late in arriving, for the Ashantis have a motto—"Time was made for man, not man for Time." This they live up to and it is a constant source of irritation to strangers that on the Gold Coast all the natives are always late. A watch does not seem to convey to their minds the same idea as it does to ours. They regard it merely as a pretty piece of jewellery.

When Krobo finally arrived, he was immaculately dressed, in a white dinner jacket, and was accompanied by his wife, a buxom woman who towered over him. Krobo was ambitious. He went in for everything in a big way—big cars, big houses and a big wife. Mary, his wife, had on a beautiful red evening dress and wore a bracelet of Aggrey beads. The Aggrey bead is a stone that is looked upon as a fetish on the Gold Coast. With a natural hole through its centre, it has all the colours of the rainbow. Mary told me that no Gold Coast girl would ever be married without her Aggrey beads, that are handed down from one generation to the next. I asked her where they came from and she told me that sometimes when out walking, a little puff of smoke would shoot out of the ground. If one dug on the spot, one would find an Aggrey bead. They were found only in places where the end of the rainbow had sat; hence their wonderful colours. That, she said, was the legend. History says that centuries ago the Polynesian traders brought the Aggrey beads to the Gold Coast, using them for barter. When the Polynesian era ended, the beads remained as family heirlooms in various African families. Many, of course, were lost during tribal wars, to be found from time to time scattered over the countryside.

We all piled into Krobo's car and drove down to the Rodger Club. The place was packed with well-dressed Africans. None of our party had brought a dinner jacket, but we were quickly made to feel at our ease, for one of the nicest traits of the African is that he is sincere in his desire to make strangers feel at home in his country. Everyone in the club was charming to us, and although the place was packed, we were given a table out in the open, overlooking the dance floor that was lit with fairy lights. A band was playing a strange rumba-like rhythm,

that I later discovered to be a "High Life"—a popular dance that was then sweeping the Gold Coast.

The dance floor was crowded, but of the four hundred odd people present, there were only two other whites besides ourselves. On all sides we were introduced to Krobo's friends, who invited us to have drinks with them.

Our host spoke to a dignified African who was passing, and introduced us: "This gentleman is the Right Honourable Kojo Botsio, who is our Minister of Education," he said.

Mr. Botsio, a serious but friendly type, shook hands and wished us a pleasant stay in his country.

During the course of the evening we were introduced to many Government officials, several members of the Legislative Assembly and the leading lights of the C.P.P. Somehow, I felt absolutely at home with these people.

I danced with a number of girls. They had a perfect sense of rhythm so that they seemed to pulsate with it. Often, out of sheer exuberance, they would run on to the floor and do a solo dance, waving their hands and stamping their feet. The band was first-class, and the formalities and politeness which the men observed when asking their partners to dance would have done credit to a Court Ball.

At one o'clock in the morning, the party was still going strong when Krobo asked us if we would like to go to a night club.

"Not like this one," he explained. "It's just an ordinary place, but it's good fun."

We left the Rodger and motored to Jamestown. The street lighting was poor. Seated outside their houses were the ubiquitous Mammies, still serving food. Candles stuck in beer bottles made a pretty colour effect in the still tropical night.

The club we arrived at had rows of cars outside and we had to push our way through a mob of taxi-drivers and prostitutes who were blocking the entrance. The room consisted of a coco-nut matting floor around which had been piled beer crates to form walls, and all was open to the sky. All nationalities were there—Lebanese, Syrians, Americans and several overseers and foremen from the different European construction companies. Black danced with white. The floor was a seething mass of dancers. The rhythm of the band, which was called the Black Beats, had to be heard to be believed. The colours of the girls' dresses—scarlets, golds and greens—blended, as they jived, with the Hawaiian designs of the men's shirts. The whisky and the beer flowed. We stayed until three o'clock, then left and went home to bed.

The following morning being a Sunday, everyone in Accra seemed to turn up at the Lisbon bar for a pre-lunch drink. Some of the younger bloods, having been out on all-night parties, wandered in bleary-eyed and looking a little out of place in their evening clothes, as they blinked at the strong sunlight.

Gradually, the bar filled up with the sporting types, armed with tennis rackets or carrying bathing suits in preparation for a day on the beach. Most of the crowd were white; the managers and staffs of the various building companies, mining engineers and Government officials, were gulping down "revivers".

After lunch, we hired a car and drove out to the Labardi Beach that we were told was a favourite spot for swimming and surfing. Labardi is the home of a number of Accra fishermen and consists largely of a few mud huts, a handful of modern buildings, the police station and a cinema. The Government has built a number of poor quality concrete houses that nearly all leak in the rainy season.

The beach is beautiful. Clean white sands stretch as far as the eye can see and, mile after mile, the huge rollers sweep in from the Atlantic. Small sand crabs scuttle everywhere, searching for food. Shaded by towering palms, all along the beach are bathing huts, owned by the various construction firms, department stores and airlines, as well as by a few private individuals. An invisible colour bar seemed to exist there, for only the white population was swimming. Farther along the beach, the fishermen were hauling on ropes. The fishing is done from canoes made from soft wood, cut from a solid bush-log. These are fine sea-boats, varying in length from 20-25 ft. with a beam of roughly 5 ft. and a draft of about 2 ft. They are unpainted and simply charred outside and in, with strange fetish designs painted on their bows to bring good luck and to ward off the evil eye. Although they are light, they are not easily capsized, but if they overturn, they can be quickly righted. Some of them carry loads of up to two tons.

At times these canoes set a type of lugsail, but generally the fishermen paddle them with three-pronged paddles, the helmsman steering by the same means. Watching them go out over the surf, I marvelled at the skill and dexterity with which they handled their canoes. Each wave is carefully watched and timed to perfection. The helmsman gives the orders and when there is a lull in the surf, he shouts his command. Muscular black bodies bend and paddle at a frenzied speed. The canoe shoots forward and over the mountainous breaker. Another command, and the crew starts singing their strangely beautiful chants.

The fishing itself is slow but effective. A net, known as a Tfani, is stowed in the boat in which there are seven men. As soon as the canoe is beyond the surf, one man jumps overboard, swimming ashore with a rope that is

attached to the net. The canoe is then paddled to the full extent of the rope that is often up to a mile in length. The net is then pulled clear of the canoe by the crew diving overboard and swimming with it at right-angles to the shore. A second rope, attached to the other end of the net is then rowed ashore. Then, slowly the net is hauled in to the beach, the entire village taking part in the operation, including the women and children. I have seen this same method of fishing employed along the Spanish coast, whither I suspect that it was brought ages ago from Africa.

When the catch is landed, it is promptly sold to the Mammies, the crew getting a percentage, and the rest being divided between the owners of the canoes and the nets, while a share passes to those who helped with the hauling.

We used the hut belonging to B.O.A.C. for changing. Outside, people lazed in the hot African sun. The beach looked much like any other sun resort, except that it was not yet spoilt by the impact of civilization. There were no kiosks or cafés. The only vendors were the Mammies, who badgered one to buy delicious oranges and pine-apples for a few pence.

We spent the day lounging on the sands and taking photographs. No one seemed to mind our using them as models. Young boys and girls came up and asked: "You take photographs, masters?"

When we took one, they asked coyly: "Give us dash, masters? Penny? Cigarettes?"

Their English was quaint yet charmingly musical, and I marvelled that they spoke any English at all until I realized that pidgin English is the language used between all traders for commerce as well as between natives of different tribes, and that everyone has a smattering of it.

The following day, we had an appointment with the Minister of Housing, Dr. Ansai Koi, at the Housing Department, where we explained to him our system of building.

When we arrived we were shown into an unprepossessing office by a permanent secretary. At a desk sat the Right Honourable Doctor. After the introduction, I took stock of him. By African standards, he was a small man. Before entering politics, he had been a doctor of medicine with a large practice in Accra.

The Housing Ministry consisted of a Director of Housing and six or seven draughtsmen, some of whom were permanent officials. All the main technical staff were white.

The composition of the Civil Service in Accra never ceased to strike me as odd. It is true to say that it is difficult to get into the Civil Service, but, once in, it is practically impossible to get out. Certainly, one never loses one's job owing to incompetence.

So far as I could understand the permanent official's job was to advise the Minister: that is, he is supposed to be an expert. A Minister, on the other hand, appeared to need no specialized knowledge; his duty being merely to keep his department running smoothly. But permanent officials, I discovered, often had been through countless departments—Health, Local Government and Education—and obviously knew little or nothing about any of them. With the chief men in a Ministry knowing nothing about jobs yet responsible for spending millions of the country's money, the resulting state of affairs was chaotic. It struck me, therefore, as entirely natural that the colonies are always faced with rising taxation. It surprised me that they are not bankrupt!

We produced our plans and photographs of the houses for the learned doctor, who duly passed them to one of his

permanent officials for inspection. From the latter's expression, I thought that I might just as well have shown him the latest Picasso. His face was blank and I could see that he was entirely out of his depth.

The usual polite questions were asked that were mainly concerned with the actual cost of the completed building. I tried to explain that the problem that really worried our firm was the cost of shipment, for each house weighed some thirty tons. I pointed out that the average freight charges from Holland were some £7 10s. per ton. To that must be added the inland freight charges, which, due to the bad state of the roads and the high cost of maintaining transport, would be very heavy. Furthermore, I said that labour on the coast was of poor quality.

After our first appointment, we were told that another had been arranged for us with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, at that time the leader of Government business. I had heard and read much about this man's exploits and of how he had been released from prison to the acclamation of thousands of Africans. Indeed, his name was a by-word in Africa. He had succeeded in consolidating African opinion, settling tribal differences and had now achieved self-government for the Gold Coast. Hand in hand with all that, he had given his people something far more precious—their self-respect.

It is small wonder that Kwame Nkrumah made a deep impression on all of us when we met him for the first time, for he is undoubtedly a great man; some say the greatest living African.

His manner was quiet and intense. He looked at me for a full minute before speaking, as though reading my innermost thoughts. Then he said in a softly musical voice: "Welcome to the Gold Coast."

In his presence, one had an uncanny feeling that he

knew precisely what one was thinking, and this impression persisted long after one had left him. Kwame was born in Axim, the son of a goldsmith. He was educated at one of the small mission schools and graduated to Achimoto College, where he trained to be a teacher. But he decided to go to America to finish his education, and studied at Lincoln University, the negro university, taking economics and sociology as his main subjects. At Lincoln, he was awarded a B.A. and later went to Pennsylvania University, where he studied theology and took his M.A. and M.Sc. degrees. To support himself, he worked during the vacations in shipyards and went to sea as an ordinary seaman. In the States, he was the outstanding figure amongst the negro students and became the President of the African Associations in the United States and Canada. While in those countries, he met Paul Robeson and other prominent negroes, and started to plan his country's independence.

On leaving America, Kwame Nkrumah came to England to study Law at University College, London. There he played a leading part in many of the West African organizations and became the close friend of George Padmore, the African writer and intellectual. His activities were many and varied, and included the editorship of the West African students' newspaper, and helping with *Pan Africal*, a paper then circulating in West Africa. He became the secretary to the West African National Secretariat, formed with the idea of working for a United Africa. His aim was to establish a Union of West African Republics. I think this is still his prime target, and I also believe that it is not so far off as some Europeans would like to imagine.

Nkrumah's organizing powers led him to be invited back to the Gold Coast to take the job of General Secre-

tary to the U.G.C.—the United Gold Coast Convention Party—a newly formed body of national-minded Africans, led by Dr. Dangrah, a lawyer of some considerable standing and political experience. Kwame's extraordinary vitality made itself felt all over the Gold Coast and he gained a large following, by addressing meetings at which his simplicity was his appeal, and "Freedom" his slogan.

In 1909, Nkrumah quarrelled with the U.G.C. and formed his own party. His creed was "positive action". Although he was opposed to violence, he believed that if it was the price that had to be paid to come to terms with the British Government on the question of national freedom, that price was worth while.

He himself did not mind being sent to prison for his beliefs and, indeed, because of them he was banished from the Northern Territories. In 1905, he was imprisoned for sedition and inciting a General Strike. When the C.P.P. won a resounding majority at the first General Election, he, as its leader, was immediately released.

Now, as we sat with him, he looked at our house plans and asked many shrewd questions. Was it possible for Africans to build these houses, taking into account that not much skilled labour existed on the Gold Coast? Could factories to produce the building materials be started on the Gold Coast?

We told him that we had brought with us a film dealing with all types of construction work, that showed the actual buildings being erected by the methods used by our firm. Nkrumah asked us to show it and promised to invite all the Government Ministers and officials to view it.

Accordingly, we fixed a date for the showing, after which he invited us to come down to the Legislative Assembly to hear a debate.

We arrived at the Assembly the next morning and were

given tickets for our seats. There were crowds of Africans outside, all in their native dress. Upstairs, in the gallery of the Assembly, we sat shoulder to shoulder with black and white alike.

The local parliamentary procedure was modelled on British lines. The Speaker, Sir Emanuel Quist, made an impressive figure and reminded me of the late Ernest Bevin. All the Ministries were administered by Africans, with the exception of Justice, External Affairs and Finance, which posts were held by officials appointed by the Colonial Office.

The actual debate that we attended was concerned with the high cost of living. The opposition was led by a chief from Accra. He gave one example after another of the rising prices of food, drink and other commodities, being continually heckled by the back-benchers. Finally winding up his long speech, he became flustered and said: "I wish to make my final protest against the high cost of high living!"

This was greeted with good-natured laughter from both sides of the House, and, after a bit, the Speaker had to call the House to order with a merry twinkle in his eye.

Some of the Africans spoke beautifully, for they are by nature good orators and storytellers.

During a recess, we were taken down and presented to several of the Ministers and members of the Assembly, by Krobo Edusei. Most of them wore their colourful national costumes and they impressed me with their sincerity.

The negotiations with the Housing Department were taking longer than we had anticipated, and as Leeuwrck and Palthe had commitments in Holland, they decided to return home, leaving me in charge.

I soon found that the delays were due to lack of co-operation on the part of the white officials, who at that time all believed that the Nkrumah Government was a mere flash in the pan and would soon be out of office. Besides, the whites were not keen to see improvement come, particularly through the agency of a foreign firm.

By now, I was getting wise to the situation. I knew that the housing situation on the Gold Coast was acute. I knew also that at least 80 per cent. of the houses that had been put up prior to Nkrumah's rise to power, would not have been considered fit for chickens at home. They were built of inferior materials and were neither watertight nor sanitary. Nkrumah had told me himself that it was his determined resolve to put an end to this state of affairs and to give his fellow-countrymen houses in which they could take a pride—houses built to a standard upon which the whites themselves insisted.

I realized, too, that one of the curses of the Gold Coast is that section of Europeans who live really comfortable lives, have luxury homes and cars, and take long holidays. Such people despised the Africans, considering them inferior. And some there were who would rather be seen dead than have a native, other than a servant, across their threshold.

Such a point of view, of course, is changing rapidly, for it can no longer withstand public opinion. Now, the natives say: "If we are good enough to earn money for you, we are good enough to make friends with you."

Nevertheless, I was constantly amazed to see and be with Europeans who laughed at the Africans, and then, when it paid them, tried to curry favour with them. However, one cannot fool the African. He lives too close to Nature, and his intuition and judgment of character are little short of uncanny.

For the next few weeks, I went round getting to know the Africans. They were all extremely kind to me and I received many invitations to "chop" with them—a term used for eating by both Europeans and Africans alike. At Kojo Botsio's, I sampled some of the famous ground-nut soup. I discovered that the African women are both good housewives and good mothers, who never leave their babies to the care of others, so that one seldom hears an African baby cry. Usually, the babies are carried on their mothers' backs and when they are hungry, the mother simply draws her baby forward and feeds it. They gurgle and laugh and all the family seems to spend a great deal of time playing with them.

To visit an African home, however, whether rich or poor, one needs no invitation. One is always welcome if the family are chopping. Most certainly a place will be found for one, and one will be given the choicest tit-bits.

On the Gold Coast there are very few white women, and the majority of those one meets are the wives or secretaries of men employed in the Government departments. Such a state of affairs presents a problem for the single men working on the Coast. The Lisbon Hotel is one of the favourite haunts of lonely bachelors on the prowl. Planes arrive daily at the airport and at night crowds of eager men can be seen at the Lisbon Bar trying to date the air hostesses or any lone female passenger. On Saturday nights, when there is a dance there, the hotel is crammed with all manner of white workers. Often there may be some twenty women dancing while hundreds of pairs of eyes follow every step they take.

Of course, the obvious and natural thing happens; nearly every white man has a black mistress, whom he keeps in secret. There are little, out-of-the-way clubs where it is tacitly agreed that one can go and where no

eye-brows will be raised. In fact, it is quite the thing to see some "high-up" come into such a place with his coloured girl-friend. Seated at a nearby table may be one of his juniors, doing the same thing. Next day, of course, not a word is said in the office about the meeting.

But this side of life on the Gold Coast is a sad one. One girl I knew, herself a mulatto, lived with a white man and had two children by him. They were beautiful girls and both white, with blonde hair and blue eyes. When the man's term of service with the Government ended, he simply left his girl and returned to England. The children were such that anyone would have been proud of them. But their mother had no alternative except to go back to her African family, taking her children with her. Between them, they brought up the children. But, I think, the African takes a much kinder view of these things than we do. At least, he does not shirk his responsibilities.

I knew several of the white fraternity who had actually bought their "wives". When they went up into the Bush they simply went to a family, gave a dowry of a few pounds and a bottle of gin in exchange for the girl. Then they kept her until they were tired of her and sent her home again.

A few white men had married coloured girls and these marriages seemed to work out, for the African girl is quick to learn and often becomes house-proud. One friend of mine in Kumasi had a delightful native wife. She could talk on any subject from education to art, and had spent two years in England. Her home was impeccable, and both parents idolized their children. They had thrown convention to the winds and it was good to be with them. He was a typical quiet, reserved, ex-public school Englishman; she, a happy, laughing, volatile Ashanti. Only when

he was with her did he drop his reserve, and then one saw his pride in having such a beautiful and accomplished wife.

During this period, I made friends amongst the Africans and saw quite a lot of Kwame Nkrumah. The more I saw of him the better I liked him. His capacity for work was enormous, for it was not unusual for him to work twenty hours a day. I had long talks with him during which I learnt much about him. He was a great admirer of Ghandi and he wanted a constitution for the West of Africa based on that of India. In both America and England he had seen the full effects of colour prejudice and racial discrimination and was determined to bring it to an end in this black man's country. His creed was that because the white man had benefited by education it did not give him the right to be master of the coloured races or to humiliate them. He also realized that if the black race were to survive in this highly competitive world, it must compete with the white on equal terms.

Nkrumah was therefore embarking on ambitious plans for free and mass education, higher standards of living—by which he meant more production and higher wages—better housing and improved health. Also he was determined to encourage the industrialization of the Gold Coast. He argued that the country was rich in natural resources that should be manufactured instead of being exported as raw materials to other countries that in turn re-exported them to Africa.

I soon discovered that Nkrumah's personal life was beyond reproach. He neither drinks nor smokes, and periodically goes on long fasts lasting up to twenty-one days. The salary paid to him by the Government he gives to his party and to various charities in which he is personally interested. His home is humble and he sleeps on a

camp bed, for his personal comfort appears to be of no consequence to him. He seldom eats at regular hours but only when he is hungry, when he chops the simplest African foods.

This remarkable man does everything in his power for the advancement of his fellow-Africans, but never for his own. This fact is all the more extraordinary in a country where "dash"—or bribery—is the order of the day. On the Gold Coast, if one wants anything done in a hurry, "dash" works wonders—as I was to discover.

My negotiations with the Government were beginning to go well, despite the criticisms from Permanent Secretaries and non-co-operation on the part of the British officials. I had shown the film in the Community Centre to thousands of Africans. It was obvious that ours were the type of houses that they wanted. Soon, the scheme became a party issue.

"We want Schokbeton" echoed all over the Gold Coast as the propaganda vans explained that the Government was trying to bring better houses to the people.

Rival British firms quickly built prototype houses in an attempt to prevent me from getting the contracts, so that it became pretty clear that I had a fight on my hands.

I had been previously and privately warned that every possible attempt would be made to make the scheme fail; first, to discredit Nkrumah and, second, to maintain the supremacy of the British contracting firms on the Gold Coast.

My proposition to the Government was that Schokbeton should be given a contract to the tune of £1,000,000. Such a contract, of necessity, had to be large in order to fit into the firm's scheme of working. I stipulated that the order should be confined to two main towns, say, Takaradi and Accra, for I knew that if good sites were available and

the elements had been landed, it would be easy to erect the buildings there in an economical manner.

After a great deal of argument, it was decided to send a member of the Government to Holland, to talk with experts of the firm. On his return, he showed me the contract which he had signed with Schokbeton. I was furious at the terms. We were committed to complete 134 houses on ten different sites, hundreds of miles apart. Also, we were called upon to build eight different styles of houses, all within the stipulated time limit of six months. Such a contract meant transporting hundreds of tons of materials over miles of practically non-existent Bush roads. In many of the places selected, there was no water. The whole scheme struck me as being thoroughly uneconomic. To add to these difficulties, we were allowed to begin with a staff of only six to supervise the building operations.

At a glance, I knew that it was altogether impossible to fulfil the terms of the contract. In the whole thing, there was only one clause that made sense. That stated that if the houses were satisfactory, the firm would be invited to erect factories on the Gold Coast for the production of further houses.

The first part of the contract was for £200,000.

The idea for the erection of factories was a joint one. We had discussed the possibility, and finally the Government agreed to spend £75,000 on an extensive survey of the availability of all the necessary materials for such a vast project. Accordingly, a new contract was signed and Schokbeton was asked to send out a team of some twenty experts, including geologists, architects, timber specialists, engineers and economists, to make their recommendations to the Government. My services were retained as liaison officer to help the survey team.

The manager of the building for Schokbeton arrived on

the Gold Coast unable to speak a word of English, but we managed well enough in German. Together we took a small house on Ring Road and converted it into both offices and living quarters. For the first time, I had the pleasure of witnessing the fruits of my labours. The firm's board was hung outside—"N.V. Schokbeton".

We were in business!

I had, by now, been on the Gold Coast some three months—ten weeks over the fortnight I had originally planned to stay. I had made up my mind that, since I liked the country and had many friends amongst the Africans, I would stay. So I sent for my wife.

In the meantime, there was a new arrival on the coast who shared all my admiration for the country, the American Vice-Consul, Robert Fleming. He came with his wife, Peggy, and son, Randy. Bob had been up at Oxford before the war and was a graduate of Yale. He was a champion heavyweight weight-lifter and a Black-Belt ju-jitsu wrestler, besides being an intellectual.

The day I met Bob, a huge case had arrived in a lorry outside the Lisbon Hotel. It contained his training weights. Four Africans tried to lift it without success. Then, Bob slowly bent down, picked up the case, hoisted it on to his shoulders and strode upstairs. The Africans looked as though they had witnessed a Ju-Ju feat.

Bob and I made several trips into Accra together. We were taken down to watch a Fetish funeral dance. The drumming and the dancing were all done to a pattern, the rhythm varying with the drums. The dance itself was carried out by both men and women. Usually, a drum would start up and one of the men would begin to stamp his feet, snap his fingers and posture with his body. He would jump and pirouette faster and faster, his eyes dilating as the spirit of Ju-Ju possessed him. The crowd

clapped and swayed—a woman came forward, sprinkling the dancing man with white powder. Finally, he would collapse, almost exhausted, to be replaced by the woman. Then the tempo of the drums changed, its intricate meaning interpreted by her swaying hips and the rhythmic co-ordination of her shapely body.

African drums are many and varied in type. Their tones range from bass to baritone and they can be muted or made loud at will. It takes a European a long time to get used to their strange rhythm.

As we stood watching, Bob took some photographs and I began idly to clap my hands to the drumming. All the Fetish women looked at me and began to laugh, then they invited me to join in the dancing. Instead, we sent a boy to buy some beer which we all drank together. Afterwards, whenever I saw any Fetish priests and women, they always shook hands and never at any time did they seem annoyed when I asked pertinent questions about their customs.

I bought a jeep and with the manager I made a tour of the building sites. The first place that we visited was Kumasi, 180 miles from Accra and the capital of the Ashantis. The road as far as Korli Bu is fairly good. But from there on, it grows steadily worse. The scenery is wonderful. One climbs through hilly country to look down on the Accra plains, stretching for miles below. Then the road narrows as it winds round a high cliff, and on it we encountered all manner of odd vehicles, including the inevitable Mammy wagon.

There are few good houses beyond Accra, and we saw mostly mud huts, one or two schools, rest-houses and stores of a better quality. The vegetation thickens as one comes to the Bush and the jungle country. I was struck by the absence of animal life.

On both sides of our road there were endless varieties of tropical trees—mahogany, teak and cotton, for the Gold Coast is a land of precious timber. But, since there is no coal mined, everyone just burns this priceless product for firewood.

Time and again, we had to stop to allow herds of cattle to pass; herds that were bound from the Northern Territories to Accra, a distance of 600 miles. There are few beasts on the Accra plains, for they are in the dreaded tsetse fly belt. The cattle we saw looked terribly thin, hoof-sore and exhausted. Most of the drovers were Filonis, who own fine herds of cows, sheep and goats that graze the great northern plains where the tsetse fly does not exist.

As we drove, the people in the villages waved and the piccaninnies beamed at us. I enjoyed the journey, but the discomfort in the jeep is a little hard on the behind!

The insects, too, were a pest, the little stink beetle being the worst of all. At first, when they landed on me, I made the mistake of killing them on my body by slapping them with the palm of my hand. The smell that came from them was nauseating, and I quickly learnt that the best way was to flick them off. The flying ants, too, were a curse and we had repeatedly to stop the jeep and clean their dead bodies from the windscreen. Once, when we pulled up by the side of the road, I was about to sit down when Van Luyk, my companion, put his foot on a scorpion that looked like an overgrown prawn. We encountered another beetle, known as the elephant beetle, that is one of the most repulsive creatures I have ever seen. It is four to five inches across its back, with black and horny pincers, like those of a crab, growing on the sides of its head. But apparently, it looks belie it, for it is said to be quite harmless.

The forest grew larger and more dense as we approached Ashanti. We came to a crowd of lorries held up by a tall mahogany tree which had fallen over the road. From a neighbouring village, men had arrived and were hard at work sawing the tree in two. A white Roman Catholic priest, going north, told me that this was a common occurrence, for we had had a few sharp showers—a prelude to the rainy season—that had loosened the soft earth round the roots of the great tree. He added that it was likely that a few more such giants would block our path before we reached Kumasi. The thought struck me that one would not stand much chance if one of these monsters suddenly crashed down on top of the jeep. The natives, however, believe this never happens. They will cheerfully sleep underneath a coco-nut palm while the fruit falls around them. The tree is a good fetish—it has a spirit that will prevent the nut hitting or hurting one.

We helped the Africans clear the tree from the road, and with a few cheery greetings went on our way. There was a dreamy sense of unreality as we drove through the villages and little towns. No one seemed to move quickly, and everywhere I had the impression that this was a nice country in which to live.

Van Luyk took a number of photographs of the people and houses we saw.

“What a beautiful place this would be with proper roads and decent houses,” he said.

Indeed, it was a tropical paradise, marred only by the squalid huts and the vile roads.

At the entrance to Kumasi, we passed the new technical institutes which were under construction, where numbers of students were already housed in small bungalows. When the university is finished, it will be one of the finest in Africa.

Kumasi itself is a Bush town and the capital of the Bush country. Although the inroads of civilization were pushing forward, this capital is still only a shanty town, in whose planning no one seems to have taken any interest. Its general appearance is untidy, dirty and disorderly.

One of Kwame Nkrumah's propaganda vans came past our jeep, blaring dance music. Then through the loud-speaker came the announcement of a meeting of the C.P.P. at which the speakers would include Nkrumah, Hayford, Minister of Agriculture, Krobo Edusei, Chief Whip, and Welbeck, Propaganda Secretary.

The crowd all shouted: "Freedom! Freedom!" after the van had passed, raising their hands in an open-palm greeting.

I turned to Van Luyk and said: "Let's go. This is something we shouldn't miss."

He agreed. We made inquiries for the Kingsway Hotel, having booked rooms there. It turned out to be run by a cheerful African. The dance floor is the hotel lounge, and even when we arrived at three-thirty in the afternoon, a radiogram was vibrating with jazz rhythm and a few couples were dancing.

We signed the register and were shown to our rooms. The beds were old and the mosquito nets left much to be desired. Moreover, our rooms were immediately above the dance floor, and their only windows looked out on to the corridor. They were hot and airless. The radiogram continued to blare downstairs.

I stripped off and went along the corridor to where there was a primitive shower bath. I climbed under it and began soaping myself, feeling happy and singing the radiogram's unvaried: "Fire, fire, fire, in de camp." When I was white with soap suds, off went the water. I let out a yell like a wounded buffalo. A servant boy came dashing up.

"What's wrong with the blasted water?" I shouted.

"Water he no go, Master," the boy replied.

"Why he no go?" I demanded.

"Me no know, Master," the boy grinned. "You wait long time, he come."

"Hell!" I shouted. "How can I wait a long time? You bring water."

The boy ran off and returned with water—about a pint—with which I had to be content.

When Van Luyk and I were dressed, we went down into the lounge. The record had not changed. More people were sitting round drinking beer and whisky.

Krobo arrived with a party of his friends, dressed in their national costumes. One, who was introduced to us, wore the long white smock of the Northern Territories. His name was Poku, and he had the reputation for being a young and energetic member of the L.A. I noticed that a number of them wore hats with the initials P.G. sewn on them in large letters.

"What does P.G. stand for?" I asked Krobo.

"That denotes that we were all sent to prison by the British Government for wanting self-government," he explained. P.G. means Prison Graduate."

They were all bound for the C.P.P. rally, so we went along with them. When we arrived, I was astonished at the size of the crowd. I estimated the gathering to be at least four to five thousand strong.

The band was playing the popular "Fire, fire—", which I had learnt was the favourite tune of Kwame Nkrumah. Chairs were produced for us, and soon we were being introduced as the white men who had come to build "fine houses" for the Africans. Needless to say, we were extremely popular.

Krobo mounted the platform and raised his hands for silence and the crowd was instantly still.

"Freedom!" he shouted into the mike.

"Freedom!" roared 5,000 voices.

"We will sing the Freedom Song." He began to beat time, and out came their party song:

There is victory for us,

There is victory for us,

In the arms of the great C.P.P.,

There is victory for us,

For us, oh yes, for us, oh yes,

In the hands of the great C.P.P. there is victory for us!

The whole valley reverberated with voices. Those who did not understand English, sang in their native tongue. Native drummers were beating drums, cymbals were clashing.

Krobo held up his hands again: "Quiet!" he shouted. "Freedom!"

"Freedom!" answered the swelling crowd.

Then Krobo began to address them in their native language. His sallies, his gestures showed him to be a born speaker. He is, in fact, the Danny Kaye of local politics. He had the crowd angry, he had them sad, he made them laugh and cheer.

Timed to a nicety was Kwame Nkrumah's arrival.

"The saviour of Ghanta!" shouted Krobo, pointing to where the soberly dressed figure of Kwame pushed its way through the crowd.

They went delirious with excitement, yelling: "Kwame! Victory! Freedom! Show boy! Show boy! Show boy!"

I think that "Show boy!" means to the Africans "Show the British what you can do. Show us all!"

Nkrumah bowed to his audience and took his seat on the platform. Speaker after speaker came forward. Casely

Hayford came up with a sound but colourless speech, partly in English. In between the speeches, Krobo acted as compère. He cracked jokes and made the crowd sing songs. During one song, he stopped the singing and, pointing to us, shouted: "These white men must go! These white men love us not! These white men take our money. They call us black monkeys!"

There was an angry roar. Threatening glances and menacing gestures were directed at us. Krobo grinned his delight. I was furious. He had invited us to attend this meeting and was now attacking us!

"Not these white men," Krobo shouted. "They're brothers! This one—" again pointing at me—"his heart is good. He is like us." Here he pointed at his hat and the sign of "Prison Graduate". After that, I made a modest donation to the party funds.

Instantly there were cries of delight and I was slapped on the back.

From that moment, wherever I went in Ashanti, I was greeted as a friend. The Ashanti is said to be difficult to know, but he is only difficult to the white people, because he is proud and hates to be treated with condescension.

When the rally was over, we were invited by Mr. Welbeck for refreshment and we went to the house of some Africans. Nkrumah and Krobo were delighted with the success of the show.

Welbeck talked to me of the problem of training labour for our building scheme.

"One of the great problems in our country," he said, "is the shortage of skilled labour. It isn't that our people don't want to learn, they do. But how can they learn the trades of engineers, carpenters, and bricklayers, when there are so few people qualified to teach them? When a Borstal

institution was started on the Gold Coast, it taught trades to erring boys. Then the fathers got the bright idea that the only way to get their sons trained was for them to commit some crime." He laughed and then said seriously: "We must have more schools, more teachers, even if we have to import them from foreign countries."

Later, Krobo took us for a drive around Kumasi. We saw the usual crowds of street sellers, for the town is the gateway to the north and the last stop before the long journey to the Northern Territories. As always, the sellers of pills and potions predominated, for it is quite amazing how many of these the African consumes. One of the best-sellers are power pills, or anything that builds up sexual strength, for the African is a great believer in fertility and breeding.

Since Krobo had made an appointment for us to be received by the Asantehew, the King of Ashanti, we drove to the palace.

The palace was a disappointment. It is surrounded by a high wall, the drive-in is good, and the lawn in front of the house, well tended and surrounded by palms. But the house itself is a small, middle-class bungalow on two floors. To the left is the King's harem, a group of huts that are carefully obscured from view by a rattan screen. No one knows how many wives the King has. In the olden days it was customary for his forbears to have some 3,000.

The entrance to the palace is flanked by stone lions that look a little the worse for wear. Five of the King's secretaries showed us into a small but neatly-kept room. A painting of Nara Sir Aser Agyman Prempeh the Second, in his full royal regalia, hung on the centre wall. He looked impressive and full of dignity, wearing the famous golden sandals, his arms one mass of heavy golden bracelets, on each finger heavy rings, around his neck a huge

triangle of gold, while on his head was a type of muslin hat with golden badges, all denoting some kind of fetish symbol. The portrait was excellent, having been done by Madame Assini, a Czechoslovakian, who has lived on the Gold Coast for fifteen years and has been responsible for many fine paintings there.

After we had waited for a while, Prempeh the Second entered the room. One of the first things one notices about him and, indeed all the Ashanti royal family, is the shape of his head. It appears to be oval. This effect, apparently, is achieved by bandaging the heads of the royal children at birth.

Prempeh was a middle-aged man with a fine, rich speaking voice and a good range of English.

"Your Majesty, it is kind of you to receive us, and we are greatly honoured," I said.

Then Krobo explained that we had come to build houses, and this pleased the King.

"If you have any difficulty, please inform me and I will do all that I can to help you," he told us. "I myself am building a new palace, and if your firm could make some suggestions and submit designs, I would consider placing an order with you."

He showed a great interest in our project, promising to come to look at our first completed house.

I had the feeling, however, that he resented Krobo, for it was the latter who, in 1908, when the trouble began in Kumasi, threatened to organize demonstrations against the Asantehew. I also had the feeling that if the C.P.P. failed, quite a number of the heads of the young men in high places would be set out in rows to decorate the tombs of the past Kings of Ashanti!

After leaving the palace, Krobo took us to the Asantehew's Prison. It is quite the most remarkable prison I have

ever been inside. It is surrounded by a 15-ft. wall and looks more like a cow byre than a jail. There were some twenty or thirty prisoners lying sunning themselves in a dirty compound. They looked at us completely without expression or interest. We inspected the dingy cells. All of the men were doing first, short terms of imprisonment for minor offences and had been sentenced by the local African magistrates. On my way out, I threw the few loose shillings in my pocket into the centre of the compound. Instantly, the prisoners came to life, piling on top of each other, biting, scratching and kicking as they fought for the money. I really thought someone would be seriously hurt. However, two warders in charge sprang amongst them and with a few lusty blows, order was restored.

The day following our visit to the King, Van Luyk and I went down to the housing department to see the site on which our houses were to be erected. We were taken there by an African Inspector of Works and when we were shown the spot, Van Luyk immediately protested, for the land was marshy and swampy. Just opposite was high ground ideally suited to our purpose.

We went back to the housing department and told the Town Engineer what we thought.

"This is in accordance with the Town Planning Scheme," he said. Having driven round Kumasi, I wondered to what Town Planning Scheme he could possibly be referring. However, he produced a splendid plan which—on paper—looked like a dream city. Nothing we could say would persuade him to change his mind. So, telling him that I would take the matter up with the Minister of Housing in Accra, we left. This was the first brush I had with the white administration and it was by no means the last. They had opposed our scheme from the

start and were now to adopt a policy of non-co-operation.

Van Luyk and I returned to Accra, where we found a controversy raging and we were in the middle of it! The opposition to the Government, no doubt prompted by the rival building companies, had launched an attack against our scheme. If this succeeded—if my plan to start factories on the Gold Coast went through—it meant a death blow to the old-established British firms then operating on the coast.

The rumours that were running wild were doing infinite harm to my firm's reputation, and I was determined to put an end to them. So I wrote a letter to Schokbeton and explained what was happening. I also suggested that it would be a benefit to all concerned if the firm would invite a delegation of distinguished Africans to visit its factories.

Schokbeton cabled back an invitation and authorized me to bring to Holland as many Africans as I thought necessary. Moreover, the Dutch Government agreed to receive any African Ministers with full civic honours.

I took the invitation along to Nkrumah, who was as delighted as I was.

"Not only must members of my Government go," he said, "but also members of the Opposition, representatives of the Press and some of our own building engineers and surveyors."

It was beginning to look like quite a party!

After a week, Nkrumah gave me a list of the delegates he had chosen. They numbered thirty in all and included the Minister of Housing, Dr. Ansoi Koi, the Minister of Local Government, Mr. Asafo Adfaye, and his wife, two chiefs, one of whom was the son of the Asantehew Nano Boorye Danka, four Under-Secretaries, my old

friend, Krobo Edusei, John Opoku, the surveyor in charge of the Asantehew Lands Department, the Town Engineer from Accra, and a representative group from the various political parties. Two Opposition newspapers and one Government-sponsored paper agreed to send their editors.

Meanwhile, our plans for the erection of the houses were going fine. Four Dutch foremen having arrived, a start had been made on the foundations for the first twenty-nine houses in Accra.

We recruited native labour. When I visited the site for the first time I was shocked at the conditions of some of these labourers. I found both men and women at work. The men were paid four shillings and sixpence a day and the women four shillings. For such miserable wages they were expected to do a hard day's work under the blazing African sun. Several of the workers I noticed had ugly-looking sores on their legs and bodies. All of them appeared to be suffering from under-nourishment.

While the men dug the foundations, the women carried away the earth in baskets on their heads. Mammies with their little stalls and baskets haunted the building site.

During the lunch break, most of them ate a meal of native chop, consisting of casava with a tiny portion of fish, served by one of the Mammies. As wages were paid monthly, the Mammies gave the workers credit. It struck me that these poor devils were working simply for their food and could have nothing left over.

I had a talk with Van Luyk and our site foreman at the end of the first week at which I said that I was determined to introduce a scheme whereby the labourers received a tinfull of rice, two cigarettes and a quarter of a pound of sugar a day in addition to their pay.

The first day that I brought these extra rations, I

sounded the work bell and all the labourers lined up. When I dished out the stuff, they looked so pathetically grateful that I was sorry I was not able to do more for them. But they repaid me by working far harder.

The following morning, hundreds of labourers from other contracting sites, appeared begging for work. As I looked at them, I thought to myself: "There are more ways of killing a chicken. . . ."

That afternoon, I went to the airport to meet Betty. As the house I had bought was not yet ready, we stayed at the Lisbon, where the service was quite good. I warned my wife to be careful of her things and told her that I was continually missing small sums of money from my pockets. As petty thieving has always irritated me, one day I set a trap for the culprit. I left a pound note in my dressing gown and went to the bathroom. Sure enough, when I came back the pound had disappeared.

I called the Head Boy. "You have thief-man here to steal pound," I told him.

"Master, there no be thief-man, all boys here my brothers," he said, looking positively injured.

"Good," I said. "You tell brothers I give no more 'dash'," and stalked angrily off to have my breakfast.

As I was finishing off my eggs and bacon, up came one of the landing boys—a bright, fuzzy-haired Nigerian.

"Master," he grinned, "me find ten shillings of your pound," and handed me back a ten shilling note, which I pushed into my pocket.

When I got back to my room I found an odd assortment of small articles which I thought I had lost, laid out on the bed; a pair of cuff-links, an old watch and a couple of ties.

The Head Boy was waiting for me.

"Master," he said, "me find things under bed."

I "dashed" him half a crown, and from then on until I left the hotel, I "lost" no more of my belongings.

Our first shipment of houses had arrived at Accra aboard a small coaster of 1,000 tons, chartered by the firm, that now lay anchored outside in the open sea, opposite the unloading beach. Van Luyk and I had a conference, and as I knew something about stevedoring from my *Earl Grey* days, I volunteered to supervise the unloading.

Accra has no harbour, only a small breakwater to shelter the canoes. In the latter we had to bring ashore everything aboard the ship, including a crane and two lorries.

The captain, a dour old Dutchman, said: "This is going to be a difficult operation, Mr. Chapman. The ship is already rolling with the swell and when we hoist your concrete elements out of the hold, they will start swinging and either get damaged or injure someone."

"O.K.," I said, "let's try."

The unloading crew were all natives. First out of the hold were two cement slabs weighing a ton. Sure enough the weight, as they reached the top deck, caused the ship to roll. Swinging against the ship's side, battering stanchions and stoving in plates, the great slabs were quite uncontrollable. Only after a fearful struggle did we manage to lower them into a canoe.

"This is no good," I told the captain, and I called for two guide ropes to be passed round the main winch cable hoist with four men tending each rope. But the result was not much better.

The ship swarmed with crew-boys, patiently waiting their turn, chattering and singing. Some were stark naked, others wore short loin cloths. All begged: "Cigarette, Master, cigarette!" Any scraps that the cook threw away, they eagerly devoured.

I marvelled at the precision with which these boys manoeuvred their canoes. As soon as they were loaded, they would start singing their Kroo sea songs, and the air was filled with their melody. Their rate of unloading equalled that of any European dockers I had ever seen. From dawn till dusk they worked, only stopping for really bad weather.

When we came to unload the crane, they lashed two canoes together and, after sweat and toil, managed to lower it safely on board. Unfortunately, when they off-loaded it on the breakwater, with the aid of the railway crane, the back axle got smashed. The two lorries went ashore without mishap.

At the end of nine days we completed the unloading with less than 10 per cent. damage, which was not bad going with materials that were brittle and easily smashed.

The Prime Minister came down to the site to lay the first slab for the first house, and the ceremony was attended by most of his Ministers as well as a large enthusiastic crowd.

Schokbeton notified me that they were sending for the delegation to Holland, and said the plane would bring down the team of sixteen experts who were to carry out the survey of the Coast.

The excitement on the day of our departure was tremendous. Many of the delegation had never been outside their own country, while some of them lived in the most primitive parts of Africa. To them, Accra was a great metropolis—the last word in what a capital city should be. As I led them to the airport, I wondered what would be their reactions to such a city as Amsterdam. I speculated, too, how they would take the flying.

When the plane arrived with our survey team, the airport was swarming with people. Nkrumah and several

of his Ministers were there to greet the new arrivals and to see us off on our long journey.

Before leaving, I was able to introduce myself to the team and take them across to the Lisbon. To Dr. Wyjmer, the leader of the party, I said: "I have a house for you and your wife. You can share it with Betty and me. It is being got ready now and you can move in in a few days."

The rest of the team, I told him, were to be accommodated in a large house with some ten bedrooms, complete with staff.

"The Government has appointed an African, Mr. Amegbe, to look after your needs," I added.

Wyjmer asked a number of pertinent questions that, in the short time I had left, I did my best to answer. Then it was time to go.

By the plane, the African delegation were kissing their wives and children good-bye. Nkrumah wished us all "bon voyage" and to the cheers and cries of "Freedom! Freedom!" we were airborne and on our way to Holland.

As we left the ground, several of the delegation looked a little apprehensive, but they were soon set at ease by their friends who had flown before. Then everyone seemed to start asking questions at once. "What was Holland like?" "Would we meet the Queen?" "How was the food?" "Give us statistics?" I did my best to answer them all. Each member wanted to make his special report. The journalists were already busy writing their first dispatches.

To keep the British Government happy about the object of our journey, Nkrumah had invited the only white member of the delegation, the Permanent Secretary to the Local Government, Mr. Hyde Clarke, who was a popular figure amongst the Africans and held in high esteem by his Minister. He and I sat next to each other on the flight. I felt that he regarded me with the greatest

suspicion. Like most of the Civil Servants, he considered it quite incredible that after a mere four months on the Gold Coast, I had landed contracts to the tune of £275,000. Now, I was taking a powerful representative party of politicians away from their country on this extraordinary trip. Hyde Clarke knew as well as I did that if all my schemes were successful, Holland would capture a lucrative market which for so long had been England's perquisite. That market had a nominal value of several million pounds!

Krobo and Nat Welbeck kept the company in roars of laughter with their jokes and songs. Only the two chiefs, wearing their glorious national dress, looked a little solemn. According to custom, they should have been attended by an escort of servants. However, owing to lack of accommodation, we had compromised by appointing certain members of the delegation to act as their bearers and servants.

"Any Pacific?" Krobo shouted across to me. His question was greeted with hoots of laughter. "Pacific" was the term used by the Africans for loose women, and Krobo was apt to use it at the most embarrassing moments. Once during a dull debate on land-tenure when the House was practically asleep, the Speaker had asked: "Any questions?" "Yes," said Krobo. "Any Pacific?"

Krobo never ceased to be a fascinating study for me. With his tremendous natural ability, he could make a crowd laugh, he could make them cry and he could whip them to anger. He idolized Nkrumah, whom he regarded as a demi-god, attributing to him spiritual powers of supernatural force. Krobo told me that Nkrumah had been known to disappear and reappear at will, that he could talk to an African, whenever he might be, by transmission of thought. At a later date, I was to witness

a curious inexplicable incident when Nkrumah demonstrated this power to me.

After what seemed an interminable journey, we arrived over Shephol Airport. From the air we saw thousands of flags flying and huge crowds of people. A military band was drawn up before rows of soldiers. The Africans shouted their delight. Inwardly I thought: "How nice of the firm to go to so much trouble." Then I reflected that the contracts must be worth even more than I had hoped.

As our plane taxied across the tarmac, we heard the strains of the military band. Press photographers and camera men stood in waiting for us as we climbed out of the plane.

I was presented to Mr. Noye, the Minister in charge of African Affairs. I, in turn, presented each member of the delegation to him.

Mr. Noye made a short speech and finished up by saying—"and, gentlemen, you are indeed fortunate to-day, for the Queen of Holland is returning from America. She will be here in fifteen minutes. We have arranged for you to watch her arrival. To-morrow is Her Majesty's birthday. . . ."

I felt a trifle crestfallen. No band for us and no Guard of Honour. The Africans looked as though they had been robbed, too. But Mr. Hyde Clarke, I thought, had an unnecessary twinkle in his eye.

However, we did steal quite a lot of the limelight. The crowds, seeing my coloured friends and the two chiefs, resplendent in their national dress, their golden bracelets flashing in the sunlight, rushed towards us, taking our photographs.

The whole delegation behaved with wonderful natural dignity. It was undoubtedly an ordeal for them. Hundreds

of planes stood about the airport. Naval, Army and Air Force officers in full-dress uniform, crowded the observation stands and reception rooms. Top-hatted dignitaries paced up and down waiting for the Queen.

When the royal plane arrived, the National Anthem was played, and out stepped Her Majesty. While we all stood stiffly to attention, and despite that absurd refrain that persists in running through my head on such occasions—"All the King's horses, and the King's men, they march down the street and they march back again . . ." I was greatly moved by the scene. My thoughts went back to Shephol Airport during the war, when I was in the German Army and had seen these Dutch looking beaten and dejected. But what a change now!

After we had watched the Queen inspect her troops and greet her Ministers, we got into private cars and buses and drove off to our hotel. We were to stay at Soestolfik, just north of Utrecht, in the Hoope Voorshe, a large private hotel, a few hundred yards from the royal palace.

We set off in convoy, the cars leading the way. The Africans were enthralled. They gazed at the shops and the traffic in awe. They let out cries of delight at the canals with their barges that we passed. The Dutch had kindly placed at our disposal a guide and commentator, who in good English with a terrible American accent, kept up a sort of James Fitzpatrick travel talk throughout the drive.

"Amsterdam", he told us, "has 400 bridges and fifty canals. Along the banks of some of the latter, lie regal houses raised upon wooden pylons. Some of these houses were undoubtedly built by the great merchant adventurers of old who traded with the Gold Coast, penetrating far into Darkest Africa, and some of the wood used for those very pylons also came from the shores of the African continent. . . ." We all made the suitable sounds of

astonishment and surprise. But, I think, we were all a little weary after our long flight—from Darkest Africa.

The Hoope Voorshe Hotel looked more like a castle than an hotel and, indeed, it dated back to the seventeenth century. There were many cries of admiration as we swung up the long drive.

In the hotel, our party was the object of curious glances from the staff for the whole place had been taken over especially for us. I shared a room with a reporter who had been sent over by the *Daily Graphic* to cover our activities.

That night at dinner several of the Africans looked puzzled at the array of knives, forks and spoons before them. Being quite uninhibited about such things, they began asking me how they should be used. When the food arrived they asked what each dish was, as for many of them this was their first experience of European "chop" and customs. Since they always drink large quantities of water with their meals, the waiters were kept busy replenishing glasses. They exclaimed delightedly at the sweetness of the water by comparison with that of Accra which is often stagnant and polluted.

After dinner, Mr. Leeuwrik told the delegation of the itinerary that had been mapped out for them. We were to visit all the well-known towns and places of interest, and a reception was to be held for us by the Burgomasters of The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Also the two Ministers were to be received by the Queen in private audience. The following day, we were to be taken on a conducted tour of Amsterdam in a private bus escorted by motor-cycle outriders.

The Africans were not long in exploring the delights of the Hoope Voorshe. They were fascinated by the running water in their bedrooms and by the lavatories. They played with the bells like naughty children and the hotel

servants were kept rushing up and down passageways in answer to them.

In the middle of the night, two of the Africans were taken ill and I called for a doctor. To my astonishment, he diagnosed their trouble as malaria. When questioned, the pair, who had never before left their own country, said that they had not previously suffered from any fevers.

One day during our stay in Holland, Mr. Noye, the Dutch African Minister, came to me with the managing director of the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works, who told me that his firm was interested in tendering for the Tema Harbour contract on the Gold Coast. Would I, he asked, be interested in representing them and help to prepare the tender figures for the contract?

I pinched myself to make certain that I was not dreaming! The value of that contract was some £12,000,000. Whoever was awarded it, would hold the key to the whole of the Volta River, and the vast scheme to exploit the untapped bauxite resources which geologists, surveyors and experts had estimated at some £140,000,000.

I struggled to hide my excitement and looked, I hope, thoroughly businesslike. I knew that the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works was probably the largest construction company in the world. It had built the harbour at Singapore and was at the moment engaged upon building the harbour at Gambia. The managing director told me that when the Gambia project was finished his firm would have large quantities of equipment that could be shipped to the Gold Coast. This, he said, placed his firm in a strong position as its tender figures would undoubtedly be lower than those of other firms competing for the contract.

It did not take me long to accept his offer to represent his company. I drew up an agreement whereby I was to

receive a salary of £150 a month and a car. As I signed this, I secretly hugged myself that I was not doing too badly. Now I was earning £300 a month and was the owner of two motor-cars—one of them a Cadillac. Better still, if I pulled off the Tema Harbour deal, I stood to make more than a quarter of a million!

I told my African friends the good news and arranged for the delegation to be flown over to see the work which the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works was doing on the North Ge'der. After this trip, the delegation promised that every encouragement would be given to the Dutch company and two of the latter's officials were at once appointed to fly down to the Gold Coast to carry out a preliminary investigation into this vast scheme.

Mr. Adamenza, the Under-Secretary of Communications and Works, then supplied the Harbour Works representatives with brief details of other projects which the Gold Coast Government had in mind, that included building bridges over the White Volta River. Such plans literally made the Dutchmen's mouths water—and mine, too!

The Phillips factory, at Eindhoven, had also sent representatives to the reception, who invited the delegation to make a tour of their plant with a view to discussing the possibility of installing electricity in the various towns and villages of the Gold Coast.

During the luncheon that followed the reception, I looked down the long table with a glow of pride. I was the first white man to bring these primitive people into a civilized community. With their natural dignity these Africans completely charmed their hosts, astonishing them with their amazing gifts of oratory when they rose to reply to the speeches made in their honour. I was delighted too that my friends could compete with their hosts on the highest diplomatic level.

That first day in Amsterdam was a long one. The reception and luncheon were followed by a tour of The Hague, whither thousands of people had flocked to celebrate the Queen's birthday. Wherever we went, we were surrounded with photographers and mobbed by school-children hunting for autographs, for the Dutch were fascinated by the delegation's native costumes.

To round off the day's entertainment, we were taken to a military parade and given a first-class view of the March Past. The Africans gave grunts of admiration as the squadrons of tanks and armoured cars rolled by the saluting base, where Prince Bernhardt stood.

"They must be very rich people," one of the chiefs said to me with awe, "to be able to spend so much money on an army and to have so many soldiers."

The Hague, that night, put on a magnificent firework display, and the cries of "Assshe!" from the Africans brought loud cheers from the Dutch.

After the fireworks, we attended a sumptuous banquet at one of The Hague's luxury hotels given by the Schokbeton Company. By this time the Africans were tired out, but, unfortunately the Dutch love to make long after-dinner speeches. One by one, the principals of the company rose to speak, and, one by one, the Africans dozed off in bored slumber.

One old director went rambling on, finally, drawing to a close, he beamed round the table and asked: "Well gentlemen, are there any questions?"

Krobo immediately put up his hand. The old gentleman was delighted.

"Yes, Mr. Edusei, what do you wish to know?" he asked.

Krobo's innocent black face was wreathed in smiles.

"Any Pacific?" he asked. His companions roared with laughter.

The old director looked blankly bewildered and turned to me.

"Mr. Chapman, any Pacific?" he asked in his guttural accent. "What is Pacific?"

"It would take too long to explain," I hedged. "It is a local joke that concerns an enjoyment which I am sure you have never experienced."

"Ah, Mr. Chapman, one day you must explain these jokes to me," the old man smiled.

After the banquet, we boarded the bus and drove home to the accompaniment of the Africans singing their old tribal songs in Twi. The Twi songs are suited to the changing mood. Now, tired out, they hummed soothing lullabies.

That night, I fell asleep to dream that I had a quarter of a million pounds in the bank!

During the days that followed, we made a complete tour of Holland, visiting universities, museums and art galleries, and attending innumerable banquets. The two Ministers were received by the Queen and came back thrilled by their experience. The audience was scheduled to last fifteen minutes, but the Queen was so interested in what was happening on the Gold Coast that she kept her guests talking for an hour.

After the audience, a cocktail party was given by the Pearsons, the merchant bankers of Holland, who have a magnificent house near to the Palace. Two of the Royal Princesses came to the party and helped pass round the drinks to the members of the delegation. The Africans regarded this as a special mark of Her Majesty's esteem and they all insisted on having photographs taken so that they could show them to their children.

I had a final meeting with the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works when it was agreed to send down to the Gold

Coast—under my jurisdiction—three of their best engineers to prepare the tenders for the Tema Harbour scheme. At this meeting, Mr. Noye promised to visit me in Accra.

Before leaving Holland, I received an interesting proposition from the Schokbeton Company, that I should go to the Middle East. The company had been invited by the Emir of Kuwait to tender for a vast housing scheme and considered that I was the best man to handle the tender. A group of Lebanese businessmen, who had seen the plans for the Gold Coast scheme, were interested in the Kuwait proposition. I agreed to take on this new job, and, subject to my work on the Gold Coast progressing according to plan, I said that I could start for the Middle East in a couple of months. I pointed out that part and parcel of my obligation in the Gold Coast—especially to the Prime Minister—had been my promise to stay in that country until the many schemes in hand were finally negotiated.

As many of the members of the delegation had never visited Britain, they asked me if I could arrange for them to do so. I fixed up for them to go to England for seven days.

I was surprised and not a little apprehensive when Mr. Hyde Clarke informed the delegation that they would be guests of the British Government during their stay. Obviously, Hyde Clarke, having seen the hospitality shown to us by the Dutch, had made up his mind that it was high time that the British Government did something to keep in favour with the representatives of a valuable Colony.

We said good-bye to all our Dutch friends and left for England. On arrival there, any further organization for the Africans was immediately taken out of my hands,

although I was the sponsor of the whole European trip. In return, I did not even receive an invitation to the dinner given to the Africans.

From the moment the delegation arrived in London, things began to go wrong. By some mismanagement, they were accommodated in a third-rate hotel in Bayswater. Realizing that this was in no way in keeping with the hospitality they had received from the Dutch, they raised an immediate howl. Through friends, I was able to find alternative accommodation for them in West End hotels.

The whole delegation were entertained at luncheons, dinners and parties by the United African Company and various other firms interested in swaying the tide of popularity that had so unexpectedly turned in favour of the Dutch and myself.

I was alone in my flat one evening when I received a call from a representative of Messrs. Taylor Woodrow, one of the subsidiary companies of United Africa, asking me to come to Grosvenor House to meet one of the directors. I was immediately interested, for that telephone call could mean that our rivals were becoming scared at our success.

At Grosvenor House, the director came straight to the point,

"Mr. Chapman," he said, "you have done more damage to our trade in six months than we thought possible. How much money do you want to come and work for us? Are you prepared to use your influence with the Gold Coast Government to get us the Tema Harbour contract?"

In answer to these questions I said that I was already committed to two other companies, both rivals of Taylor Woodrow.

"If I act for you, I will do so only with the authority of the Prime Minister and the two firms that I represent," I

said. "If you are prepared to give me double my present salary and double my present commission, I might consider it."

The offer must have staggered him. I was already receiving £300 a month and $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of any deal that I might negotiate for either Schokbeton or the Netherlands Harbour Works. If he accepted my offer, my commission on the Tema Harbour deal alone would be £500,000.

That same evening, I telephoned Krobo asking him as a personal favour to bring as many members of the delegation as possible to have a drink at my favourite local pub, the "Star" in Belgrave Mews on the following morning.

"Tell them to wear their full native costumes," I said.

Next morning, Belgravia witnessed the strange sight of the Africans in their full regalia trooping into the little English pub.

The proprietor, Pat Kennedy, having recovered from the initial shock, being an Irishman, was soon on the best of terms with those other "smoked-Irish", the Ashantis. Soon the bar was crowded with the usual Sunday morning *habitués* and the Africans, for once had the pleasure of meeting the English in one of their own inns, where colour and creed played no part.

Welbeck, the Propaganda Secretary, asked me why it was not possible to open up a few establishments like the "Star" on the Gold Coast, where people could get together over a friendly glass of beer and settle their differences quickly and quietly?

I must say that I agreed with his suggestion as I looked round at the Africans being stood drinks by City businessmen and Chelsea artists and invited to parties by some glamorous young frip-fraps.

It was a strange thing, that first meeting in a pub, for

when we returned to the Gold Coast, the Africans seldom talked of the opulence of the hotels in which they had stayed or the gracious banquets they had attended, or the Ministers, Burgomasters and royal personages that they had met, but only about the ordinary, friendly folk they had talked with in that English pub. . . . Even now, whenever an African comes to London, he immediately heads for the "Star", where Kennedy is host.

After two weeks in London, I returned once more to the Gold Coast and went to live in the new house which I shared with Mr. Wyjmer.

During my absence, Betty had engaged five servants and already had the house running smoothly. She had mastered the business of marketing although the fact that she did her own shopping seemed to shock the wives of the white community.

The house had but one disadvantage. In order to reach it from the main road, we had to cross a small stream with the aid of stepping stones that were sometimes dangerously slippery. So with the help of some native labour, I started building a bridge over the stream.

At night, Wyjmer and I were forced to leave our cars parked on the side of the main road until such time as the bridge was completed. Two days after my return, I received a telephone call informing me that Mr. Leeuwrik was arriving on a business visit. I left the house, crossed the stepping stones and the main road to where my car was parked on the grass, to find that during the night all four wheels had been removed. A friendly African, seeing my predicament, drove me to the airport to meet my director.

Our building scheme was progressing well in Accra, where some twenty-nine houses were under construction.

Building had also begun in Takeradi and Kumasi, and every week hundreds of tons of material were arriving in Takeradi. Unfortunately, due to the bad handling of the cargo, the percentage of breakages and damage was very high, at times, as much as 50 per cent. The Dutch foremen were keen and worked long hours in order to complete the scheme on schedule. But I knew that it was doomed to failure from the start, due to the long lines of communications which we had been forced to establish in order to pass our supplies through the Bush.

Leeuwrik called a conference of all the surveyors and builders at which it was decided that Accra was to be used as the planning centre for the whole scheme.

One of the chief handicaps of the surveying team was the complete lack of co-operation between the English geologists at the local Government Survey Bureau and themselves. The attitude of the officials was, "We have found out over the years the hard way, so why should we tell you?"

Our office was now a hive of activity. The survey team had bought eight jeeps and six cars, while the building party, which was a separate entity, had three jeeps and six cars. But the relationship between myself and the white Director of the Housing Department, was becoming strained. He had done everything he could to slow down our operations. To add to our troubles, the Minister of Housing, for his own personal reasons, wanted the firm of Taylor Woodrow to have the Schok-beton contract. I spent many hours explaining the ramifications of all this to Leeuwrik. While I was still doing so, I received a telephone call from a high official inviting me to his house that night. Would I, he asked, come alone.

On arrival I was shown into a small, filthy, fly-infested

room where my host offered me a whisky and, without any beating about the bush, said: "Mr. Chapman, if I care to, I can smooth away all your difficulties, but like everyone else, I want my 'dash'."

"What is your idea of 'dash'?" I asked him.

"I think that I should have at least five or six thousand pounds," he answered calmly.

"Mr. Kegerlleran," I said, "the money that is being spent on this scheme is allocated by your Government and checked by your Housing Department. On every penny that is spent a return must be made. How do you think we would be in a position to pay you this dash?"

"I am not interested in the technical details," he said "I want the money."

I shook hands with Kegerlleran and left him. I went round to Krobo and told him of Dr. Ansai Koi's proposition. Krobo, in turn, went to the Prime Minister. Nkrumah was furious, and the next morning sent for Dr. Ansai Koi and demanded his immediate resignation.

In his place, Nkrumah appointed a man of great talent, Mr. Asafe Adfoye, who was not a member of the C.P.P., but who had been on the tour of Holland with us. Before becoming a politician, he had been one of the foremost lawyers on the Gold Coast and was personally a rich man.

Immediately he was appointed, Adfoye called a meeting between all the members of the Housing Department and the representatives of Schokbeton, at which he insisted that there should be full co-operation to the scheme by the white personnel. The latter were by no means pleased and, I could see, that once again they blamed me for going over their heads to the highest authority.

Unfortunately, this was only too true for unless I went to Nkrumah I could get nothing done. If I proceeded through the official channels of the Housing Department,

I waited for weeks before getting some simple matter straightened out. Such delays increased costs and we were continually up against blank walls. Both the Dutch and myself felt increasingly frustrated when we knew that urgent materials were lying at Takeradi simply because we could not get the necessary forms out of the Customs officials. Often, too, by some mischance, which I thought was calculated, hundreds of tons of materials would be dispatched from Takeradi to the wrong site. Consignments of cement, ordered from Holland, somehow were delayed for weeks, so that we were forced to buy on the open market. And the moment our rival firms heard that we were short of cement, the price rose from nine shillings a bag to sixteen and even eighteen shillings. Reinforced concrete acted the same way at such times, rising from £30 to £60 a ton. To me the reason for all this was clear enough. The higher the cost of our houses, the less chance the scheme stood of success.

All this, I explained to Asafe Adfoye.

But, in spite of everything, our scheme looked like being a huge success. When the Africans saw the first house completed, they were delighted. The Europeans, however, complained that they were far too good for the natives, who would not appreciate modern cooking stoves, showers and flushing lavatories. In this they were entirely wrong. The Africans loved their houses and were continually coming to Betty to ask her advice regarding decorating and furnishing.

Now that we had a home, we entertained a great deal, giving a number of dinner and cocktail parties. At the latter, I introduced the Africans to Pimm's—a drink admirably suited to the hot climate. Its popularity spread like wild-fire. The sandwiches and canapés that Betty made became all the rage and the wives were always

coming round asking her to show them how to make these tit-bits. Then they would vie with one another in producing a wonderful assortment of such delicacies, inviting some Europeans along in order to show off their new poise at tea and cocktail parties. Betty, in turn, was initiated into the art of making African "chop" and often a welcome change in our diet was a delicious frou-frou with chicken or paw-paw stuffed with fish.

Nkrumah, being a bachelor, often sent his boy to ask Betty if she would arrange his table and mix the cocktails when he was entertaining visiting diplomats and white delegates from some foreign country.

The two engineers having arrived from the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works, I began helping them with their tender for the Tema Harbour contract. After some weeks we completed it and then decided to prepare a further tender for the bridge that was to be built across the White Volta River at Walla Walla, one of the most northerly points of the Gold Coast.

The night before I left, Betty and I were sitting on the verandah looking out into the beautiful African night. In Africa the moon and the stars look bigger than anywhere else in the world. From the Bush, we could hear the croaking of the myriads of bullfrogs, the chirruping of crickets, the piping of native flutes and the rhythm of the drums.

Below, my servant boys, having finished their work, were having a nocturnal discussion. Peter, my head boy, was a Nigerian, while Salu, the second boy, came from the Northern Territories. The cook, a Togolander, was joining in the discussion. He was a Roman Catholic convert, while Peter proclaimed that he had been baptized by a Scottish Presbyterian Mission. Salu admitted to no religion and was looked down upon by the other two as a

pagan. As none of them had a common African language, their conversation was carried on in a comical pidgin English.

"How you go take white man Ju Ju?" Salu asked Peter.

"You ignorant black man," Peter retorted. "White man he plenty fine Ju Ju. You see here." To prove his point, he pulled from his pocket a tattered and dog-eared bible. I knew that Peter's reading consisted of understanding one word in ten.

"What he speak, that fine Ju Ju?" Salu asked. "How he do?"

"I tell you, black man," said Peter solemnly. "First nothin' no day, so-so yama-yama. When God go look all this he no like 'um at all and he take the yama-yama and put 'um for one side—he call 'um earth. He go plant plenty fine thing for inside, cassava, yam, breadfruit, plantains, paw-paw and plenty other fine chop. After he go put inside monkeys, baboons, leopards, bushfowls and plenty more fine beef. The water he put for other side he call 'um sea. Inside he put fine-fine fish, barracuda, snapper, apapa, mackerel and plenty more kind. When that all finish he like 'um too much, but he 'fraid dem monkey go chop all them fine thing he plant. He take small earth, make head, belly, hands, feet—after he go blow small breeze from him nose, and man deh. God cal 'um Hadam. 'Hadam', say God, 'you see da fine-fine garden? You go be watchman inside. I go pay you libbury, you no go sleep and you no go chop dem paw-paw inside dem garden. Suppose you go chop 'um, you go get big bellyache plenty palaver go come and I go sack you one time.'

"After Hadam walka fro some time he no happy at all, he no get company for talk, so he go see God and say: 'Sah, I no be happy for that job. I no get company for

talk.' So God go take Hadam to hospital for small operation, he take small bone from Hadam body and go make woman. He call 'um Heve. Hadam he glad too much and he dash Heve small money for go walks with him inside garden. 'Look Hadam' say Heve, 'this fine chop too much, why you no chop 'um?'

"Hadam he say: 'No sah, this chop no fit for black men, God go make plenty palava if I chop 'um.'

" 'Nonsense', say Heve, 'this fir for black man, suppose you go chop 'um you go get sense pass white man.' Well, woman get plenty power pass man and when she talk sweet for Hadam he take one paw-paw and chop 'um. One time plenty palaver come. Hadam get big belly-ache and go run latrine for bush. When God see he vex too much and he call Hadam. 'Hadam', God shout, 'come yeah one time.' But Hadam he 'fraid and no answer. God say: 'Hadam if you no come yeah I go call CID for arrest you one time.' When God call three times Hadam answer with small voice: 'Yes sah, Massah, I deh.' God ask: 'Wh's da matta, Hadam, why you no answer first time? Hadam you go chop dem paw-paw from that tree, no be so?' Hadam he 'fraid so he shake inside him body and say: 'You see sah I no want chop 'um at all, but that woman you make for me, she de talk sweet for me so I done chop 'um.'

"God he tell Hadam: 'member what I tell you, now I go sack you'. He call one angel, him name be Gabriel. Gabriel make application for licence to blow trumpet for police station. When he blow trumpet plenty water come an thundah and light from upstairs too much. God he drive Hadam and Heve for outside. They no get raincoat and umbrella and get plenty wet and suffer too much. After they walk long time they see one man, him name Noah and he foreman Elder Dempster. He build

fine boat and Hadam and Heve go for inside and after they go water for long, long time they reach West Africa. There they build fine upstairs house and born plenty pickins and live happy."

The journey to the Northern Territories with the two Dutch engineers in a jeep was, to say the least of it, uncomfortable. Since the rainy season had begun, the dusty roads north of Kumasi were already showing signs of being washed away. The windscreen of the jeep as we skidded from side to side became plastered with mud, and we were forced to stop repeatedly. The rains are not just a steady downpour, but come in short sharp bursts, followed immediately by brilliant sunshine, and myriads of insects appear miraculously the moment the rain stops.

Beyond Kumasi, the scenery changes from Bush to rich, rolling pasture land. Just before arriving at Walla Walla we came to our first objective, the White Volta River. Some thirty or forty lorries were drawn up at the side of the road, while across the river an equal number were waiting. The only means of crossing the river was by an old pontoon ferry that could carry one lorry at a time. Hundreds of natives stood placidly waiting to be taken over. From talks with them we learned that some had been there for two days waiting their turn, sleeping in the open and drinking the water from the vast, muddy ever-rising Volta. Already the river had risen six feet. From the surrounding trees, we discovered that this mighty river had a rise and fall of thirty feet.

The Africans were delighted when they found that we had come to build a bridge and although it would be quite two years before it would be completed, they insisted on shaking our hands and dancing round us like excited children.

We walked a few hundred yards along the river bank and watched the crocodiles dive headlong into the current and then turn round to stare at us, curious at our intrusion. Several natives stood up to their waists in the river fishing with hand nets, taking little notice of the crocodiles that drifted by. All about us little paroquets and canaries, chirped and sang.

We had no difficulty in taking our turn at the head of the queue, the Africans helping us to load the jeep on to the ferry. The crossing took half an hour and was a slow and tedious business. The old pontoon carried some sixty people, perched precariously on its rotting bulwarks and railings. Its crew kept up a chant as they pulled on the lead wires, hauling the pontoon across the river.

At Walla Walla we were told that the only accommodation was a rest house three miles north of the town which was occupied by a mining engineer. This we found was delightfully situated on a hill overlooking a green valley. The engineer, a burly cheerful fellow, gave us a warm welcome and some cold beer. He told us that he had been in the Bush for some six months and that his only companions were the black boys who worked with him. He was typical of his kind and had lived in Africa for thirty years, spending most of his time in remote places. He seemed strangely at peace and told me that he did not miss the city or the bright lights, but preferred his solitary existence.

As we sat on the verandah in the twilight, he pointed to a water-hole some 200 yards distant, down to which all kinds of animals crept from the bush—a magnificent leopard and her two cubs, a little family of baboons, nervously holding each others hands. Fascinated, I watched as they drank the water and splashed it gamboling around like children.

In the distance we could hear the drumming from some village.

"To-day the chief is happy," the engineer told me. "One of his wives has just given birth to a son, and I sent him two bottles of gin to help with the celebrations."

We talked until the small hours of the morning, gaining much knowledge from the man's vast experience of the district. Next morning, Tomlinson—for that was his name—agreed to come with us to Bolotanga, the most northerly town in the Northern Territories.

Everywhere we went I was struck by the wonderful physique of the people. Most of the women went around, to all intents and purposes, naked, wearing only the briefest of brief panties. The men, Tomlinson told us, in the Northern Territories believed that if they wear clothes, they will have an evil Ju-Ju on them.

"It's a good belief," he said, "for in this humid climate, clothes get soaked with sweat and unless you are continually changing them, you stand the risk of rheumatic fever."

Bolotanga, as yet, has been unspoilt by the inroads of civilization and is completely African. The moment we pulled up our jeep in the market we were surrounded by crowds of stark naked boys and girls, holding up little cages containing minute humming birds and canaries. The price of the latter varied according to their singing powers. The air was filled with the whistles of the children as they tried to persuade the birds to sing for our benefit. For a few shillings I bought some half dozen assorted paroquets, humming birds and canaries. Then we explored the market and found examples of beautiful raffia matting and wide-brimmed, gaily decorated hats, which we bought as souvenirs.

In the market we saw fine, fat contented-looking cattle

that I could not reconcile with the miserable specimens I had seen in Accra after they had made their long journey. I could not help thinking that there was a fortune waiting for the man who installs a refrigerating plant and devises some means of transporting meat from the Northern Territories to the coast. In the former meat can be bought for sixpence a pound. On the coast that same meat sells for four shillings and sometimes four and sixpence. Should anyone want adventure and a good living, I advise him to buy two ten-ton refrigerating trucks from the Army surplus depot of the type used in Burma, and ship them to the Gold Coast. It needs no great mathematical genius to work out the percentage of profit which could be made, always providing of course one could organize the supplies of oil and petrol.

One of the curious anomalies of the Gold Coast is the lack of any kind of initiative in starting new enterprises. Most of the Europeans stick to the established towns and the existing industries. None of them ever dares to venture to fresh fields. Yet there is room for a tanning industry, and there are all the materials available for paper mills. Down the Volta there are huge deposits of limestone that could be turned into cement. In many of the places I passed through I saw stratas of mica. So far as the supplies of valuable timber are concerned, these are practically inexhaustible. The surface of the agricultural possibilities of this vast country has, as yet, only been scratched. The Government has started some fine plans for raising cattle, and near Accra there is a modern Government farm where, under the guidance of a British expert, a herd has been raised which is showing signs of immunity from the deadly tsetse fly.

The news of our arrival spread rapidly in the village, and a beaming African came up and invited us to a glass

of beer. He was the brother of the Minister of Works, Mr. Braimah. From him and from Tomlinson, I learned a great deal about the Northern Territories that are the most primitive part of the West Coast of Africa. There are few schools and the mass of the people are without any education. This does not mean, however, that they do not receive any kind of instruction, for from birth every boy and girl is taught how to make a living of some sort. Their lives are hide-bound by fetishes and superstitions. Their religion is one of celestial worship and of the earth gods by which they imagine they are surrounded. Your native has a fetish for everything. He has river fetishes, tree fetishes and cattle fetishes. If some mishap befalls him, he believes that he has offended the fetish and must make amends by sacrifice, the size of the sacrifice depending on the magnitude of the disaster.

Until a boy's head is shaved, he is not allowed to marry, but once this is done and suitable sacrifices have been made, he goes a-courting. Usually, he singles out a girl from a neighbouring village, and proceeds with gifts for his prospective wife's family. If he is acceptable, the family keep the gifts, if he is not, they send them back again.

Before marriage, the girl is sent to the boy's compound and there she sleeps between him and his best friend. For, perhaps a week she lives in this way, when convention allows that she becomes his lover, but forbids that the friend should touch her. If both parties are suited, and the girl turns out to be to the satisfaction of the friend, then she remains in the compound and more gifts are sent to her father. If, on the other hand, she is rejected, he sends her home and demands the return of his presents.

After we had finished our drinks, Braimah took us for a walk round the market. Seated in a corner with his legs

crossed, was an African fetish priest. In front of him on the ground were laid two stones and a bone. Before him knelt a young native girl of not more than sixteen. The priest gave her first the stones to hold and then the bone, while he chanted some words to her. I wondered what this strange ceremony was all about. Braimah told me that she was begging for fertility. Child-bearing amongst these people is considered a great honour and practically everywhere we went we saw these robust amazons in various stages of pregnancy.

Tomlinson told me that in Bolotanga it was not unusual to see well-educated Africans who were successful businessmen professing to be Christians, arriving in their cars to consult the fetish priests, often paying them large sums of money. It was a common thing to hear an African say that thanks to the fetish priest, a court case had been won, a troublesome rival stricken with illness or that a barren wife had become pregnant.

When we got back to the rest-house, Tomlinson suggested that we should go shooting. The country round abounded with game and a succulent bush turkey or a wild duck made a welcome addition to the evening meal. We set out across some marshy ground where I saw a bush turkey only some fifty yards away. As it rose, I fired and dropped it. I ran across the marsh, up to my knees in mud and water, followed by Tomlinson, to retrieve my turkey. As I bent down to pick it up, I heard a loud explosion close behind me. I almost jumped out of my skin when I saw Tomlinson pointing to a six foot black mamba which I had disturbed in my eagerness to get my turkey.

"A good job I saw that one," Tomlinson said. "If a mamba strikes you, you've had it!" Then he told me an interesting theory that he had about these snakes.

"I have shot dozens of them," he said, "often from a distance of at least fifty yards and each time I have found that I have blown their heads off. I believe the reason for this is that a mamba moves so quickly when making a strike that it can actually see the bullet coming and rises to strike at it. Otherwise how is it that so many people manage to kill mamba with a single shot?"

In less than half an hour we shot six bush fowl, four turkeys and several duck and, well satisfied with our bag, made our way home.

Over dinner Tomlinson told me how a chief detected crime in his village. The suspects were brought before the fetish priest and if they confessed they were usually forgiven, the priests insisting that it was not the man who had committed the crime, but the evil spirit within him. Sacrifices were therefore made to exorcize the spirit. If, however, the crime was repeated two or three times, it was held that the evil spirit was still in possession of the criminal. The poor wretch was then tied to the ground and boiling butter poured into his eyes. The idea being to blind the eyes controlled by the spirit and so kill the evil. If the culprits did not confess to their crimes, they were forced to drink a mixture of earth and a root poison. When their stomachs swelled, it was considered a proof of their guilt. If they died then the fetish priest proudly proclaimed them guilty. On the other hand, if they survived the ordeal and their intestines showed no signs of swelling, they were declared innocent.

The following morning, we bade Tomlinson good-bye and left for Accra. We drove the whole day through the broiling heat, taking turns at the wheel. In the early hours of the next day we came to Taffo, where there is a large cocoa research station. All of us were exhausted by the jolting we had received.

Suddenly I heard a scream like an animal in pain. The Dutch engineer pulled up the jeep.

"What was that?" he asked me.

We all listened, and the wailing and screaming continued. Jumping out of the car, we ran into the Bush towards the cries. There we came upon an African brutally clubbing a very small boy who lay cringing on the ground. I dashed forward and seized the club and with it hit the African a terrific blow over his thick skull. He let out a yell and dashed off into the Bush. The little boy lay on the ground at our feet with ghastly cuts all over his tiny body. We carried him gently to the jeep and, tearing up a shirt, did what we could to stop the flow of blood. For the rest of the journey, I held the little chap on my lap and all the way he moaned piteously.

As soon as we arrived home, I woke Betty who when she saw the terrible wounds on the child's emaciated body, nearly fainted. I immediately telephoned to the Dutch doctor, who was accompanying the survey team, and asked him to come quickly as we had an emergency case for him. When he arrived a few minutes later, he diagnosed a badly fractured arm, severe damage to the pelvis in addition to serious cuts and bruises. The child, he said, also had ringworm and was suffering from malnutrition and rickets. He looked like some of the pathetic little creatures I had seen in concentration camps.

"What can we do?" Betty asked the doctor.

"If you leave him, he will undoubtedly die," he said. "But knowing you, I don't suppose you want that to happen."

He set to work while my boys clustered round deeply shocked at the child's condition, for the Africans are devoted to children. When the boy's arm was set, Awini,

who understood his language, tried to talk with him. But we could get little out of the terrified creature. He even refused to eat or drink, so we made up a bed and put him to sleep in a corner of Awini's room.

The following morning when I went to see the child, I found him devouring the chop the boys had made him. He ate like a hungry animal, stuffing the food into his mouth with his fingers, for he was obviously famished. I sent one of the boys to fetch some milk, but he refused to drink it. When I held the cup to his lips, he began to tremble violently and was quite apparently terrified of me.

"Why he have fear?" I asked Peter.

Peter grinned, showing his flashing teeth. "Black bush men they tell him white man chop little boys," he said. "White man no good."

I stroked the boy's woolly head and he cringed away as if he expected me to kill him.

"Tell him," I said to Awini, "he be with friends and need have no fear now."

Awini talked to the child, trying to reassure him, but with little result.

The Dutch doctor attended the boy twice a day. We fed him on vitamins and cod liver oil, and the transformation in him was amazing. I would go and sit by his bed, holding his hand, and sometimes he would smile at me. I talked to him through Awini and gradually he lost his fear of me. His recovery was slow and at first he walked painfully because of his dreadful injuries.

We bought him small toys and for hours he would sit mastering the intricacies of a little clockwork motor-car, or playing with a rubber ball. We dressed him up in khaki shorts and a shirt, and at night when I came back from the office, he was always at the gate of the house, rushing

forward to open it. As soon as I got out of the car, he would shyly take my hand.

His greatest thrill was to sit on the floor of the lounge listening to the radio. When he heard dance music, he would clap his hands with delight and start to dance. At this stage, he was still a most unprepossessing little creature, with his shaven head and his thin, knobbly kneecaps and his rickety little legs. But he soon began to put on weight. He was bright and quick to learn. Often when he saw me reading he would come up behind me quietly and look puzzled at what I was doing. When I bought him his first book—a comic strip, he sat for hours on the verandah pouring over it and asking Awini to explain it to him.

My boys regarded him as a good luck omen and spoilt him hopelessly. Betty and Mrs. Wyjmer were concerned with the problem of what to do with him and there was great rivalry between them as to who could produce the largest number of child's garments in the shortest possible time.

At the office, Wyjmer and I had a good laugh over all this, for our respective wives were making the same complaints at nights to each of us about the clothes that each of them made for Abudi, as we called him.

At the start, he thought that in order to get food he had to steal it, and on several occasions Betty found him helping himself from the larder. When she caught him he looked as though he expected a beating. I called Awini and told him to explain to the child that he could have all the food he wanted when he was hungry and that there was no need for him to steal it.

From inquiries I found that there was a good school to which we could send Abudi, but when I told him that he was to go there he looked frightened and worried.

However, in company with his now devoted friend, Awini, I drove him to the school which was situated high above the lovely Accra plain. The headmaster, a sympathetic and kindly African, promised that the child should live for the first few months in his own home with his two sons, and I, in turn, agreed that Betty and I would visit Abudi at week-ends.

About this time, I received a cable from the Middle East informing me that the Emir of Kuwait was interested in the housing scheme that the Lebanese had put before him, and suggesting that I should fly to Lebanon to consult with Mr. Tamani, who would assist me with my negotiations in Kuwait.

The cable worried me, for I realized that if I left the Gold Coast, I would leave the Dutch more or less at the mercy of the British. Due to the language difficulties, it was impossible for the Dutch to cope with the subtle obstruction tactics of our rivals. However, I worked out my schedule and decided that I could risk being away for a fortnight.

I flew to Kuwait via Tripoli, Cairo and Beirut. At the latter, I was met by Mr. Tamani, a Lebanese who belonged to the famous Jebel Druze tribe of fanatical Moslems living high up in the mountains overlooking Beirut. In his car we swept up the winding road, whizzing round hair-pin bends with screaming tyres, missing other cars and buses by inches. At the end of half an hour of continuous climbing, we arrived at Tamani's house, standing in a spacious garden amongst the peach and apple trees. The house itself was literally perched on a precipice and the view from the verandah was breath-takingly beautiful.

Tamani had spent many years on the Gold Coast,

where he had amassed a considerable fortune, owning a cinema, a block of flats and a building business. Now he had settled in Lebanon, leaving his Gold Coast interests in the care of his son, while he planned to develop building schemes in the Middle East.

Madame Tamani wore the full veil of the Moslem as indeed did all the women who visited the house. Infidelity in Lebanon is absolutely unknown, for if any man or woman is found guilty of it, they are immediately put to death.

After dinner, over a cup of sweet, thick Turkish coffee, Tamani enlightened me as to the political situation in Lebanon. Like most Arabs, he spoke violently against the Jews, hinting that in the near future another conflagration would break out in Palestine.

"This time," he said, "there will be no intrigue by the British or the Americans to do us out of our birth-right."

I listened to him patiently, but doubted if what he said was true, for my experience with Arabs was that they were a disorganized people, riddled with internal jealousies and hates.

I heard with interest, however, that the Lebanon was a mass of intrigues and rackets and that vast quantities of materials and food arriving from the States for the Arab refugees were freely sold on the Black Market. Tamani said that only a very small portion of these supplies actually reached their destination and that vast fortunes were being made by the politicians and racketeers who worked hand in glove together.

My host asked me if any of the directors of Schokbeton were Jewish, for, if they were, it would be difficult for the firm to obtain any orders in the Middle East. I replied that I did not know, but, if required, I would ask for the

necessary blood tests to be made in order to prove Aryan purity.

He said that there was a complete embargo on goods of proven Jewish origin in the Middle East. "But," he added, "of course there are always ways and means of getting round this."

When I later met many of the leading businessmen I realized the truth of Tamani's remark for many a Mr. Cohen had obviously become Mr. Cowen and Mr. Levy, Mr. Lever.

Tamani told me that an American Mission was in the country for the purpose of making recommendations to U.N.O., who were prepared to grant vast sums of money for rehousing the Arab refugees. He suggested that we should meet these Americans and lay before them a scheme similar to the one now in operation on the Gold Coast.

"There is a tremendous market in the Middle East for housing," he said. "We have contracts in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and in Kuwait. But unfortunately it will be impossible for you to go to either Saudi Arabia or Yemen, for at the present moment no Europeans are allowed there."

He explained to me that King Ibn Saud had successfully played off one European country against another and raised loans, running into several million dollars from America. This money was for the purpose of forming an army that would be a bulwark against Communism. In fact, according to Tamani, the dollars had simply disappeared and Saudi Arabia still had nothing to show for it. It was presumed that the bulk of this fortune had gone into the King's private coffers, for Ibn Saud had a huge family as well as numberless relations and hangers-on all of whom he kept in luxury. To suit his ends, it was

his policy to keep his people in ignorance and to forbid any contact with the outside world.

The more I listened to Tamani, the more I realized that it would be extremely difficult for any European to do business in the Middle East. The Arab States were rife with anti-British and anti-American feeling. But since the Dutch had no interests in the area, Tamani was of the opinion that he could calm any political fears and suspicions that the Dutch would be seeking any territorial rights. In fact, he assured me, he was at that moment requesting permission for engineers from Holland to enter Saudi Arabia and Yemen. So far as I was concerned, however, unless I could persuade the Dutch to give me a passport, there could be no question of my going to either place.

Before we went to bed, Tamani said that the following day he would present me to the head of his tribe, who was a man of great influence throughout the Middle East.

The next morning we set off by car for a little village to the north of Sidon, through steep hills and deep valleys. On arrival, we were shown into a beautiful mountain house with a distinctly monastic atmosphere. An Arab servant led us into a sort of conference room and brought us coffee. Then the head of the Jebel Druze came in and Tamani fell on his knees and kissed his hand. He was one of the most imposing men I have ever seen, standing well over six feet. He wore a long black cassock. His thick, curly beard, sharp hooked nose and fierce black eyes, belied the gentle tone of his voice as he spoke to us in perfect English, telling us to be seated.

Soon he had me engrossed in answering questions about the Gold Coast and I was amazed at his knowledge of that country, for Tamani had told me that he rarely left his village and had never set foot outside his country. I could

not resist asking him how it was that he was so well versed in current affairs.

"I make use of the radio," he said. "and frequently members of my tribe, like my friend Tamani, pay visits to me from all over the world."

I showed him plans of the houses we were building in Africa and he was deeply interested, promising to give Tamani letters of introduction to various influential men throughout the Middle East.

When the interview ended. Tamani again kissed his chief's hand and received his blessing. Then he offered me his hand which I took and he blessed me, telling me to go in peace.

While in Beirut I visited many prominent Lebanese who had friends and relations on the Gold Coast, amongst them, Madame Chabanne, whose brother owned a brick and tile factory in Accra. She was married to the head of the Supreme Court and was herself a member of the Moslem Youth Movement. Both she and her husband were interested in our plans and introduced me to the Minister of Housing. From the latter we gathered a lot of useful information about the rehousing of the Arab refugees by U.N.O.

I was astonished that the moment we started discussions concerning the establishment of a factory in Lebanon, every official we met blandly asked for his percentage of graft or "dash".

Shortly after my arrival, we set off to Damascus to discuss business with some Syrians. At the Syrian frontier there was a long line of cars waiting to cross the border. We went into the Immigration Office where, after a vigorous searching of files and checking of passports, we were allowed to proceed. But not so a group of four large cars filled with angry Americans. No amount of

threats or cajolery moved the Syrian officials who adamantly refused to allow the party over the frontier. The officer in charge said politely but firmly: "You are not going to cross. We will not give you permission." The Americans were furious and rang their legation, but all to no avail—they were turned back.

Crossing the border, we met lorry-loads of soldiers and we were told that there had been an incident on the frontier and that seven Jewish spies had been caught and executed that morning. Twice during our journey we were stopped at police barriers and our car and personal luggage searched.

Tamani's friends in Damascus told us that there were vast construction schemes afoot for new barracks to house the growing Syrian Army, and again I felt that when these new armies in the Middle East were sufficiently strong, hostilities would once more break out.

Back in Beirut I made an application to the British Embassy for a trip to Kuwait and, after filling in the necessary papers, I was told that I would have to wait a week for a visa. I pleaded, begged and implored, saying that time was pressing. Finally, after three days I obtained my visa.

I flew to Kuwait over the Lebanese mountains and across the Iraqi desert. At Kuwait the airport is simply a strip of the never-ending desert. Gleaming white in the blinding sunlight are miles and miles of great oil storage tanks and the atmosphere is permeated with the smell of petrol. When we landed, the temperature was 115 degrees and pouring with sweat I went to the bar in the waiting room and demanded a beer.

The steward looked shocked. "Sir," he said, "you must read the airport notice. We serve no alcohol in Kuwait."

I went across to a large notice fixed on the wall and

there read the proclamation signed by the Emir of Kuwait, declaring that no alcohol was allowed to be imported into the country. We persuaded the steward to telephone for a taxi and set out across the desert in a cloud of dust. We passed desert Arabs, shrouded in their white cloaks, and women enveloped from head to foot in a long black garment in which two eye-holes were cut. In the streets of Kuwait we scarcely saw any women, for they hardly ever leave the harem. We told the driver to take us to an hotel and he drove us to a sand and concrete shanty. The place was swarming with flies. The proprietor, a dirty-looking Arab, told us that the only room available was already occupied by two Arabs and that the charge would be £2 10s. a night, breakfast being extra. As there was no other accommodation available, with this we had to be content.

The guests were a motley collection, amongst them being a Dutchman from a famous Dutch brewery, who had arrived without knowing that the whole of Kuwait was strictly teetotal. He was bemoaning his fate, for he had to wait at least a week for a plane to take him back to Beirut. The Dutchmen told us that the several Indians staying in the hotel were pearl buyers.

Tamani, the Dutchman and myself, after a bad meal, washed down with tepid, somewhat stale water, went out to explore the town. To walk in Kuwait is no pleasure, for the streets are dusty and the cars passing by smother one in sand. The shops are open stalls and all that they have for sale is cheap trash from England. But the Kuwaitians themselves are splendidly dignified looking people. A group of three, mounted on magnificent horses, rode by us, one of them carrying a fierce-looking eagle on his arm. A number of them wore finely carved and jewelled daggers at their waists.

Tamani took us to a shop that sold pearls, where I bargained for two fairly large, but badly shaped, near-black pearls. Then we strolled down to the harbour where there were several fishing and pearling dhows tied up to the quay, while farther down were moored the tankers waiting to load with oil.

Before the discovery of oil, Kuwait existed mainly for pearling and smuggling. Its last known rainfall, Tamani informed me, was one tenth of an inch some ten years previously. The main water supply comes from what the local inhabitants call the brewery, which distills seawater into drinking water that is more expensive to buy than petrol.

Beneath the sands of Kuwait lies probably the largest reservoir of newly discovered oil in the world which provides an income of £50,000,000 a year to Abdullah al Salih al Salah, the Emir. He has little on which to spend his money, but has embarked on the building of some new schools, a new hospital and the housing scheme in which Tamani and I were interested. But the difficulties of carrying out such schemes are enormous, for everything in the way of materials has to be imported.

I soon decided that Kuwait must be one of the world's most unattractive places, for nothing green grows there. Yet, for me, it had certain fascinations, for, as we stood on the quay, we watched some dhows being loaded with merchandise which, we were told, would be smuggled into Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

After an uncomfortable night at the hotel, where we were plagued with sand flies and I was kept awake by the snoring of the Arabs who were sharing the room, feeling hot, tired and bad tempered after washing in a jugful of tepid, sandy water, I set out with Tamani for the Ministry of Communications and Works. The head of this was

General Hasteed, whom the British had appointed as adviser to the Emir. The General proved to be a shrewd individual, who, Tamani told me, was highly thought of by the Emir.

I showed him plans of the houses and told him briefly of our work on the Gold Coast. After half an hour's conversation, he dropped a bombshell. Shortly after Tamani's last visit to him, Messrs. Taylor Woodrow's representative had called and persuaded him to accept a scheme that was identical in every detail to our own.

I quickly realized what had happened. The British, alarmed at the amount of business Schokbeton had done on the Gold Coast and seeing that we might corner yet another lucrative market, had immediately contacted General Hasteed and talked him into giving them the contract.

Further discussion seemed pointless, so, thanking Hasteed for receiving us, we went back to our hotel. Tamani was furious at having brought me on a wild goose chase all the way to Kuwait and insisted that we should seek an audience with the Emir. However, I talked him out of this, for I knew that the Emir relied on the British and that Hasteed's word was as good as law in Kuwait.

From the Jebel Druze chief we had letters of introduction to the Emir's cousin that I now decided to use. We took a taxi into the old mud-walled quarter of the town and drew up before a massive door in a high, mud, sand and cement wall. On entering a courtyard, we saw a flat, straggling Moorish house, the windows of which were coated with dust. We knocked at yet another door which was answered by a handsome Arab servant. Inside, the house was like a scene from the Arabian Nights. Glorious tapestries hung from the walls and priceless rugs covered the mosaic floors. In the audience room were low divans, spread with multi-coloured cushions.

The Emir's cousin was a man in his late thirties. In perfect English, he invited us to tea. Then he rang a bell and a huge servant came in, with muscles bulging, carrying a magnificent, glittering yellow tea service. Quietly the servant poured out the tea and handed me the small cup. Its weight astonished me until, on closer inspection, I found that cup and saucer were made of pure gold, as indeed was the entire tea service!

We told our host of our predicament and of our interview with Hasteed, and he offered to help us. If our houses were of good quality and provided their price was within reason, he said that he saw no reason why the Emir's decision should not be reversed.

Our business being finished in Kuwait, it was without regret that I left the hot, barren wasteland. I was not even deeply disappointed that there was little chance of doing business with the Kuwaitians. If we had signed a contract, it would probably have been necessary for me to live in that benighted desert for many months. As I told Tamani, I would not have worked there not even for £20,000 a year. Life is too short.

In Beirut I found a telegram waiting for me from the Gold Coast requesting my immediate return, so I left at once, telling my Lebanese and Syrian friends, who had come to see me off, that I would return to their beautiful and intriguing countries in due course.

At Accra I was met by Wyjmer and Van Hoyk, the building manager, who both told me that the propaganda against Schokbeton had grown worse during my absence. I at once set to work and pin-pointed several of the hold-ups and obstructions. However, precious time had been lost and a great deal of money wasted.

The survey team's report was nearly ready and was a massive document. It was my idea to present it in two

sections; one, an outline which could be easily read, and the other a complete volume which the Government experts could study fully.

The virulent talk of bribery and corruption had reached a crescendo and the Dutch were beginning to wilt under the pressure.

Nkrumah, at this time, was making full demands for self-government, and much to the jubilation of the Africans, he had been promoted to Prime Minister. He at once invited Betty and me to the Initiation Ceremony, and instructed his Permanent Secretary to issue us with tickets.

On the morning of the ceremony, there was great activity amongst the C.P.P. in Krobo Edusei's house. Unfortunately, either due to an oversight or by deliberate intention, my wife and I did not receive our tickets. Shortly before the show was due to begin, Nkrumah arrived in a fine Kanti cloth, with several of his Ministers.

Nkrumah said: "You and Betty are coming along to the ceremony." I told him that I had not received my tickets and he immediately telephoned to his Permanent Secretary, who explained that the precious tickets had been issued to some other people and added that the spectators' gallery was now full.

Nkrumah was furious and shouted down the telephone: "Then place two chairs next to mine in the Assembly."

After a few minutes, the Secretary rang again and told me that, after all, he had found two tickets and managed to fix us up with seats in the gallery.

It was a great day for Nkrumah, and Africans from all over the Gold Coast flocked to the Assembly. After the Governor had announced the constitutional change and Nkrumah had made his proclamation of independence, the C.P.P. held a Victory Parade. With outriders leading

his car, which was filled with party members, he insisted that Betty and I should follow in the car immediately after him, and to cries of "Freedom! Freedom!" we took part in this great parade.

The Africans would not allow Nkrumah to start his car, but insisted on pushing it through the streets where at every corner he was greeted with the C.P.P. victory song and cheering crowds.

After we had toured the whole town, we dodged through a side-turning to a friend's house, where we opened up the champagne and drank Nkrumah's health. Betty and I were the only white people present on that memorable occasion.

From now on, the attitude of even the most die-hard Gold Coasters changed towards Nkrumah and his administration, and indeed, towards the whole black race. The white populace realized that if they wanted to remain in the country, they must keep in with the Africans. Betty and I were besieged with requests from the very people who had castigated Nkrumah, to bring him along to dinner and cocktail parties. Business firms pestered me with requests for introductions to the great man.

Messrs. Taylor Woodrow, who had been tendering for the Achiasi Railway contract and, prior to Nkrumah's rise to power, had practically completed a deal for £4,500,000, were suddenly informed that their tender would not be accepted.

Their building manager, Mr. Heyward, came round to my house and explained the amount of work that his firm had put into getting the contract.

As I listened to his story, I realized that it would be possible to live on friendly terms with the British as there was enough work for us all in this country, so long as everyone was prepared to work together. So I agreed to

help Taylor Woodrow with the Achiasi Railway contract. I went to members of the Government and explained that if Taylor Woodrow were not awarded the contract, another year would pass before some other firm would be in the position to tender against them.

Within a month the Gold Coast Government took my advice and announced its decision to award the Achiasi Railway contract to Taylor Woodrow. That firm's manager was delighted and asked me if I would care to go to England to discuss the possible terms of the tender for the Tema Harbour. By this time, a number of British firms were interested in the huge contract that was the best plum on the West African tree. Whoever pulled it off had the key to an even greater scheme involving some £140,000,000.

I pointed out to Taylor Woodrow's manager that I was already under contract to the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works, but if the latter were prepared to amalgamate with Taylor Woodrow, I saw no reason why we should not do business together.

I realized, too, that the Schokbeton contract was going none too smoothly and that pressure was being brought to bear by the Civil Service. In six months we had only completed some sixty-five houses. Repeatedly I asked the firm to send out personnel who could at least speak English, but inevitably they sent me another man whose only language was Dutch. When the managing director arrived on the coast, I explained to him all the difficulties we were having. But after weeks of waiting, I came to the conclusion that only lip-service was being given to all my appeals. So, after telling Nkrumah my plans, I wrote to Schokbeton tendering my resignation.

I now intended to work only for Taylor Woodrow and the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works.

About this time, I received a cable from Frank Owen in London that he had succeeded in getting my book—*The Eddie Chapman Story*—past the authorities who had banned it under the Official Secrets Act. Frank said in his cable that he had also found a publisher for the book and had received a substantial offer from the *News of the World* for the serial rights.

This news put me on the spot, for I realized that if the book was published, the whole story of my past life would be known to the world, for it was my personal biography. Its contents, of course, would come as no surprise to Nkrumah, who had previously received from some official source a detailed account of my past activities, no doubt with the intention of sabotaging the work I was doing with the Gold Coast Government.

However, I told Nkrumah and other African friends the news and they all agreed that the book should be published. As I was unable to go home, I cabled Frank that I was giving Betty a full power of attorney to negotiate all the contracts concerning *The Eddie Chapman Story*. Armed with this authority, my wife left for London.

After I had concluded my work for Schokbeton and had submitted a copy of their recommendations for building factories on the Gold Coast to the Government, I reported to Mr. John Guthrie, the over-all manager of Taylor Woodrow on the Gold Coast. He informed me that all my terms for an amalgamation between his firm and the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works would be favourably met, but explained that the final decision would have to be made by his London office. So I followed Betty to England.

The next few days in London were busy ones for me. Representatives of the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works

came over to England and I presented them to the directors of Taylor Woodrow. At a meeting it was verbally agreed that a joint tender should be submitted for the Tema Harbour contract and that I should be appointed as agent to the two companies.

I had every reason to feel pleased with myself, for in terms of commission alone I stood to earn a quarter of a million pounds!

Meanwhile, Betty was going ahead with the publication of *The Eddie Chapman Story*. In the offices of Allan Wingate she had signed a contract and that firm's directors had sold the serial rights to the *News of the World* for a large sum. Everything in my garden seemed lovely.

Then occurred one of those unforeseen incidents which again managed to change the whole course of my life.

It all began with a quiet little party at the "Star", where Pat Kennedy, over a few drinks, decided to throw a party for his wife's birthday, at the Maisonette Club.

On arriving at the latter, we ordered champagne and settled down to celebrating and drinking the health of Pat's wife. There were some twelve or fourteen of us round the table and the champagne flowed freely.

Little did I realize what was to be the outcome of this convivial evening!

Into the club came three characters around the West End whom I knew slightly, but who must remain nameless in this story.

By now, Pat Kennedy was a little high and he went over to one of them, accusing the latter of presenting a dud cheque at the "Star". Until I heard voices raised in anger, I had no idea what was happening. Then I looked round and saw Pat lying on the floor while the two West End types punched him. Pat shouted across to me to help him. I grabbed hold of one of them, took a left-hand

swing at him and managed to contact his eye which I split open. Whereupon, the other two characters ran swiftly out of the club.

Trivial in itself, the incident had a damping effect on our evening and soon the party broke up.

For seven days I heard no more, but one evening when I was dining with Frank Owen at Les Ambassadeurs, he said: "There is a rumour going round Fleet Street that you are to be arrested on a charge of robbery with violence. You haven't been getting into any trouble, have you?" he asked with a sly smile.

I laughed at his expression and told him that more than a week ago I had smacked a chap in the eye.

But the next day when I went into the "Star", the situation took on a new and unpleasant look. Lined up at the bar were four detectives from the West End Central Station. The sergeant in charge of them came up and asked me to have a drink. Then he said: "We don't want any trouble here, but we have a warrant for your arrest. Both you and Kennedy must come along to the Station, where someone has laid a charge of Common Assault against the pair of you."

I said: "O.K. let's get it over with," and Pat and I left for the Station.

There we were formally charged with assault. I also asked the reason why the police had waited for eight days before charging us. I was told that no complaint had been made until three days after the incident and that it had taken some time to execute the warrants.

"All right," I said to the sergeant, "we have nothing to say now, but we will fight the case in court. What about bail?"

"I'm sorry," he told me, "Mr. Kennedy can have bail, but as another member of the club says that he thinks

you are the man who later the same evening, in company with three other men, attacked him in a side street off Piccadilly and stole his wallet and some private papers, I can't allow bail."

At this I exploded. "What is this," I shouted, "a frame-up?"

The sergeant was polite. "I'm sorry, but I have a duty to perform. Have you any objection to going on an identity parade?"

Knowing the drill only too well at a police station, I suggested that my lawyer should be called to witness the identity parade.

Ten men of about my height took part in it. The club member was brought in, and without a moment's hesitation, walked over to me and said: "Yes, this is the man who assaulted me."

"You dirty little bastard," I shouted at him. "First you try to blackmail me, then when that fails you frame me!"

So a fresh charge was made against me—one of robbery. According to the blighter, at 1.30 in the morning in a street that is always crowded at that hour with Mayfair prostitutes and night club *habitués*, I assaulted and robbed him, together with three other men. He had said nothing to the porter of the hotel where he was staying, but had retired to bed too frightened, he declared, to speak to anyone. Although he insisted that he received severe bruises, he refused to be examined by the police doctor.

I was furious at the charge laid against me, but realized that there was more to it than appeared on the surface. I knew that I had enemies and believed there were a number of people at that moment ready to go to any lengths to keep me off the Gold Coast.

There was no means of getting bail, and so from

Saturday until Monday morning, I remained in a police cell, seeing only Betty and my lawyer.

On Monday morning I appeared in court with Pat Kennedy, and was remanded on a bail of £2,000. Only one defendant put in an appearance. The court was told that the others were not available. One was in Paris and the other ill in bed.

Immediately I left the court, I set to work preparing my defence. At precisely 1.30 in the morning, together with a photographer from the *News of the World*, I went to the scene of the alleged crime where at intervals of five minutes over a period of three-quarters of an hour, we took photographs. Never during that period was the street deserted; indeed, it appeared to be one of the busiest quarters of London. On one corner was a large restaurant, outside which, until two o'clock, stood a commissionaire. I questioned the latter, telling him about the charge, and he told me that he was ready to give evidence to the effect that he was on duty at the time of the assault and had seen precisely nothing. Then I took statements from a number of prostitutes who nightly patrolled the street. They, too, agreed that they would come forward to say that at 1.30 they were in the street and had neither seen nor heard three men attacking anyone. After that, I produced evidence to prove my whereabouts at the fatal hour. Fortunately, five friends of mine had been in my flat and all were prepared to swear to this on oath in court. Moreover, several characters in the West End came to me privately and volunteered the information that they had heard my enemy openly boasting that he would fix me. I contacted more witnesses who were ready to give such evidence in court.

My solicitors briefed that brilliant young counsel, Mr. John Ritchie, to defend me.

"I'm not just content to win this case," I told him, "that is extremely important to me but I also want, if possible, to prove that these people are guilty of conspiracy and perjury."

The following Saturday, Kennedy and I jointly appeared at Bow Street. Kennedy was found innocent of the assault, but I, since I had struck the blow, was fined £10 and bound over to keep the peace for twelve months. In court, the police officer in charge of the case, produced yet another doctor's certificate for the bloke who was ill, and told the magistrate that his pal had not returned from Paris. Thus it was impossible for the court to proceed with the other and much more serious charge that had been made against me.

The newspapers, of course, had come out with headlines about the case, and all round the publicity was doing me no good, for although I knew I was innocent, one always has a few kind friends who walk about shaking their heads and saying: "Where's there's smoke, there's fire!"

Then another blow fell. A friend rang me up and said: "What about the report in *The Times* about the tricks you've been up to on the Gold Coast?"

I sent out for *The Times* and read that the commission at Accra inquiring into the resignation of Mr. Braimah from the Gold Coast Cabinet, were asking some pertinent questions about "dash". Krobo Edusei had spent two days in the witness-box giving evidence. The Solicitor-General had questioned Krobo about a dispatch case containing £500 that Krobo's driver, Frimpong, was supposed to have collected from me at the Lisbon Hotel. Krobo had hotly denied this accusation and also the suggestion that he had received "dash" from me in connection with Schokbeton's contract or the Achaisi Railway contract.

Later, I received a call from Tom Hayward, who, after retiring from Scotland Yard's Fraud Squad, took up a similar post on the Gold Coast. Hayward asked a lot of questions and also told me a good deal of what had happened in Accra since my departure. Nkrumah, he said, had been accused of accepting £40,000 from George Padmore as his part of the commission on the Schokbeton contract.

The repercussions to the Accra inquiry were not long in being felt in London. First, I received a call from Taylor Woodrow, saying that due to all the adverse publicity I had suffered, the firm felt it could no longer employ me and, therefore, requested my resignation. Shortly afterwards, the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works wrote me a letter upon the same lines. There was nothing I could do. Since I was on bail, and could not return to the Gold Coast, I decided that Betty would have to fly out to Accra to wind up our affairs, so she applied for a visa and booked her air passage.

However, the night before she was due to leave, we were visited by two high-ranking police officers from Scotland Yard, who told us that on the direct order of the Home Secretary, Betty was banned from returning to the Gold Coast.

Our hands were successfully tied and I wondered secretly who really was responsible for this amazing situation. It was a strange sequence of events that, immediately after the Bow Street case, the fellow whose eye I had blacked, who had been completely penniless, suddenly found himself with the funds to leave for South Africa, while his pal in Paris was now "on tour" in Italy.

In all, I made nine appearances at the police court, and on each occasion the illness grew worse so that the bloke could not stand as a witness against me. Finally, a police

officer was sent to bring him to court. On my final appearance, the court was packed with well-wishers and I never realized before how many friends I had until that great day when the magistrate decided, in view of the non-appearance of witnesses, that the case be dismissed and struck off the records.

Free at last, but unable to return to the Gold Coast, I anxiously awaited the findings of the commission of inquiry into the alleged bribery and corruption. It's findings are worth quoting.

"MR. EDDIE CHAPMAN'S EMPLOYMENT BY MESSRS. TAYLOR WOODROW (WEST AFRICA) LTD.

319. We have discussed the history of this contract. . . .

320. There was a rumour that the final award of the Contract to the Company after their first tender had been rejected might have been due to the influence exerted on their behalf by Mr. Eddie Chapman, whom the Company later appointed as an agent on 1st July 1903. It has been suggested that the Company paid the sum of £6,000 to him, £3,000 of which was paid in this country and £3,000 in London. It was also rumoured that he had paid £500 each to Mr. Krobo Edusei and Mr. Atta Mensah.

321. Mr. Guthrie, the Company's Managing Director in the Gold Coast says that Mr. Eddie Chapman's duties as agent were multifarious under the terms of the agreement; 'they depended upon circumstances'. He was employed, he explained, mainly for two-fold reason:

First, that he had useful contacts with allied companies in Europe.

Secondly, that he had useful contacts in this country and he is known to sympathize with the Africans.

An instance cited in support of the first reason was that

Mr. Eddie Chapman introduced the Company to the Royal Netherlands Harbour Works Company.

322. Mr. Guthrie further says that it was not Mr. Eddie Chapman who offered his services, but the Company which first approached him. He states that Mr. Chapman had nothing to do with the Achiasi-Kotoku contract and that no commission has been paid to him in respect of the said contract.

323. The sum of £6,000 which the Company has paid to him was an advance payment for his services rendered in accordance with his liaison duties between the Company and people in Europe with whom he had contact, and for certain things done in the Gold Coast in entertaining and promoting the name of Messrs. Taylor Woodrow generally among influential Africans. Mr. Guthrie states that £3,000 was paid to Mr. Chapman in the Gold Coast and £3,000 paid by the London Head Office, the arrangement to pay the amount having been made by the Head Office. He says that £6,000 is not a substantial sum compared with what contracting companies pay to people for liaison expenses in Europe.

324. Mr. Chapman's engagement was a provisional one at a salary of £150 per month from 1st July 1903. Mr. Guthrie and Mr. Chapman travelled together by air to England in the first week of August 1903. Mr. Chapman's engagement was first confirmed and then terminated, when he got into a position where he attracted public attention of the wrong kind, instanced by sensational articles in the English Press. He does not know on what terms Mr. Chapman's engagement was terminated, but he might have been paid about £2,000 for loss of office.

325. We have thought fit to state the above evidence in view of the kind of publicity which Mr. Chapman's

activities have attracted since he left the Gold Coast, but we do not consider it calls for any finding on our part."

Well, that was that. Along with Nkrumah and several members of the Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly, I was completely exonerated.

However, sitting around licking my wounds was not my idea of having a good time. Besides, on paper, at any rate, I had lost a lot of money.

PART THREE

The Yachtsman

BACK IN London, I learnt through devious channels that Billy Hill had bought a boat. This immediately had me speculating. Not only me, but Scotland Yard and Interpol as well.

Billy, for many years, had enjoyed the reputation of being a hard, resourceful and daring character. Although many of the tales about him were exaggerated, there was no doubt that his was the brain behind half a dozen of the major crimes in Britain, for they bore the stamp of his amazing personality. However, knowledge is one thing—proof another—and the latter being singularly lacking in this case, Billy was free.

I was once again at a loose end and so I looked up Billy Hill. One thing I liked about him; his explanations are short and to the point. We met, he offered me a share in his ship for £2,000, and I accepted. His ship, the *Flamingo*, was then lying in Tangier where Billy had sent her, and we were in business—any business that would bring in the money.

Bill and I were soon on our way to Tangier. Betty drove us out to London Airport and, as we had time to kill, we went in to the restaurant for breakfast.

"What are you having?" I asked Bill.

"Porridge", was the answer.

I burst into fits of laughter. Bill must have swallowed three tons of that loathesome food in the course of his life, for every morning in a British jail they give one a regulation

pint of it. Usually guys who have done time detest the stuff. But Bill thrived on it. Another thing that he still likes is Bully Beef, at every meal, rain, hail or shine! H.M. Prisons serve it every Sunday, yet I am certain that if Bill ate it at every meal for the rest of his life, he would be quite content. In fact, later on when I asked him to victual the *Flamingo* for ten days, he went out and bought four sacks of spuds and 156 tins of corned beef—and nothing else. This highly varied and nourishing diet was not discovered until we were fifty miles out at sea, so we lived on it for ten days. The language of the crew had to be heard to be believed.

We arrived in Tangier, via Gibraltar. It was good to be back. The airport was hot, dusty and overcrowded. A polyglot mob thronged the shabby waiting-room.

Suddenly, I heard a shout. "Hello! What the hell are you doing here?" It came from Don MacBride. I was delighted to see him. Moreover, it was a stroke of luck that I had bumped into him.

He told me that he had bought a ship called the *Gay Deceiver*, in which he intended to take himself and his family to the West Indies, *en route* for which he had called at Tangier, where they had at once been besieged with propositions to "trade on the high seas".

His father, who had since died, started the business, and the canny old Scot had done extremely well. Seldom had his ship, or ships, run into any trouble. One of his ships, however, made newspaper headlines while I was first in Tangier with my Beachcraft. She was reported missing in the Mediterranean for over a month. At the time, Don's wife had rung me up to ask if I would loan the plane to search for her husband's ship, but, unfortunately, the Beachcraft was undergoing repairs. However, I went to a close friend of mine at Lloyd's and this wonderful

organization got to work, finding Don's ship within two days. Accordingly, I sent a dramatic cable to Mrs. MacBride—"Ocean Rover O.K. Drifting with engines broken down". This she received at least twenty-four hours before news of what had happened to the ship reached Tangier.

Later on, when I saw Don's father, he told me the whole story. I only wish I could tell it in his rich Scottish accent, for old MacBride, as he was affectionately known to everyone, looked not unlike Barry Fitzgerald, the famous film actor, and had the latter's same dour wit.

He told me that *Ocean Rover* was some twenty miles off the Italian coast when both her engines broke down. As he was carrying a cargo of cigarettes, and if the ship drifted within the Italian coastal limits, all of them would have been seized and imprisoned as contrabandists. Moreover, the cargo was worth some fifty or sixty thousand pounds. Again, if they sent up distress rockets and were taken in tow, they would be subject to huge salvage claims. Old MacBride, having decided that his ship was in no danger, made up his mind to try to get some fishing vessel to tow him back to Tangier for a mere towing fee.

As the days passed, they sighted several ships and signalled messages to them. But for some strange reason none of these were ever delivered, in spite of the fact that an international search was going on for the *Ocean Rover*. With the aid of a jury sail and by running an auxiliary engine, the old man managed to cover several hundred miles of his journey home. Finally, even the auxiliary packed up. Food was exhausted and water short, but the MacBride tenacity and luck held. He managed to do a deal with a passing vessel that towed him back to safety for the price of the tow alone.

On another occasion, off the Canary Islands, Old

MacBride, although outside territorial waters, ran foul of a Spanish gun-boat, that fired shots across his bows and over his mast, ordering him to heave-to. Although his ship would only do ten knots, he headed her out to sea. The gun-boat gave chase and put herself broadside across MacBride's bows. The grand old smuggler threatened to ram the gun-boat, and the Spaniards retaliated by training their machine-guns on *Ocean Rover*. MacBride ordered Don, his only son, to get up for'ard and then trained a searchlight on him.

"Go on and shoot!" he roared. Then he shouted to his wireless operator to send out messages that he was being attacked by pirates.

When several vessels appeared over the horizon, the gun-boat sheered off.

It is an international law that if one is outside territorial waters in time of peace, one is free from interference. Often, however, the Spaniards went twenty or even thirty miles out to sea in order to force vessels into the limit where they claimed them as prizes. But when they met old MacBride they were unlucky. Even now when he is dead, his reputation for toughness and courage still survives. His son, Don, is a "chip off the old block". As I have said, he is physically tremendously strong, and I have yet to meet the man who can beat him in a hand-pressing competition.

Don had an hour to wait for his plane to Gibraltar, where he was going to collect his ship's clearance papers, so we sat over a coffee while he gave me the gen on business in Tangier.

"It's not what it was, Eddie," he told me. "There are too many boats there now, and the Italians are undercutting everyone. Then a lot of craft have been hi-jacked, and it's getting difficult to operate."

"Well, look Don," I said, "I don't want to tread on your toes or take any of your business, but if you can fix us up with something I will be grateful."

Don thought for a minute, then he said: "If you're not scared of being hi-jacked and can invest 60,000 to 80,000 dollars, I can put some business your way that will bring you a third profit. You will earn, say, 20,000 to 30,000 dollars a trip."

"That'll do," I told him. "I have friends who will back me. How does it work?"

"Well", he explained, "a syndicate in Switzerland organizes the business. You buy, say, 1,500 to 2,000 cases of cigarettes here. They will cost you forty dollars a case. When you're loaded, they pay a third of the value of the cargo before sailing. You must be prepared to stay at sea for at least three weeks to a month. On board, a representative will sail as supercargo, who will give you your rendezvous, usually twenty or thirty miles out at sea, either off the Spanish, French, Portuguese or Italian coasts. This group will give you a twelve-month contract," Don added.

I made a quick mental calculation. If everything went in our favour I reckoned on a profit of 250,000 dollars in a year, after crew and running expenses had been paid.

"Also", Don went on, "I can get you a run down to Corsica; a charter run, but you will only get £1,200, which for a seven day run isn't a great deal."

As Don was now going to Gibraltar and then to Switzerland and would not be back for several weeks, he gave me a number of useful contacts. Then we shook hands, and he went on his way.

Bill and I made our way through the Customs, got a taxi and, dodging stray donkeys and Arabs, went down

to the harbour where I saw *Flamingo* for the first time. She was a converted Fairmile, driven by a pair of Grey diesel engines. Everything about her was immaculate, and as she lay glistening in the bright Mediterranean sunlight, the blue water lapping her boottop, I felt a thrill of excitement.

Then I went aboard and met the crew, many of whom were old friends, and looked over her accommodation. The crew's quarters were amidships, just for'ard of the engine-room, and consisted of two cabins and a mess-room galley. Cooking was done by calor gas, and, as an emergency, there was an electric stove. Aft, was the large double cabin that Bill and I were to share. It was roomy and comfortable. I had no complaints. The ship's range was some 1,500 miles. She was well equipped, having a ship-to-shore radio, with a range of 100 miles. Also she was fitted with a direction finder that can be invaluable when making an exact rendezvous at sea, for it enables one to pin-point one's position on a chart, despite fog or bad weather.

But it was *Flamingo's* cargo capacity that interested me. She could carry some sixty-five tons. That does not sound much, but sixty-five tons of contraband can add up to a lot of money. I licked my lips. I like money. Show me the man who says he doesn't and you show me a liar! The only difference between our smuggling fraternity and the rest of the world is that we are prepared to take risks. We are our own law; we have our own code. We live or die by it. Men who have broken it have been killed, maimed, cut up. . . . Usually, they deserved it.

The *Flamingo* was manned by a group of tough characters. There were eight of them. None except the skipper had had any previous sea experience, yet they had brought their ship non-stop from England, learning

the game the hard way. But despite sea-sickness and a certain amount of bad weather across the Bay of Biscay, they were all in fine form; as happy and resourceful a mob of tearaways as it has ever been my pleasure to meet.

Unfortunately, the daily papers in London had got wind of the fact that Bill owned *Flamingo*, and so her arrival was heralded by a resounding blast of publicity that did not do us any good.

Bill and I put up at a small, inconspicuous hotel in Tangier. Nevertheless, the morning after our arrival, there came a knock at the door and in walked Mr. "Sherlock" Holmes, an officer of Tangier C.I.D., now retired. He was a funny little man, rather dull and looked as if he really had found something to do at last. For Tangier, contrary to popular belief, is not really a wicked town. In fact, its crime statistics prove it to be far more respectable than Bath or York. Of course, brothels flourish, but they are legal. Smuggling is its chief industry, but that also is legalized. In fact, one banker told me that a few more people like myself and my friends would help Tangier to live up to its reputation.

"I want you and Mr. Hill to come up to the *Sûreté*," "Sherlock" said. "and you must bring the rest of your crew with you—at ten o'clock."

Bill and I were both in bed drinking our early morning tea. We knew that it was no good having an argument with the law unless it was absolutely necessary; no use fighting until we had to. All the same, we remembered the true saying—"There are no good coppers but dead ones. . . ."

We went down to the harbour and told the crew. Dannie Lions, once a member of a smash-and-grab mob, and Jackie Dewer, a famous professional fighter, who owing to a bad smack in the eyes had had to give up

fighting, both wanted to barricade themselves in and have a fight. Little Gerald Bull, quiet, but the type you would rather have on your side than against you, said nothing but was ready for anything. Ernie Wilson, tall and lanky, wanted to fight. The skipper and Worth, the wireless operator who was a young father, both looked worried.

Bill and I told them they had nothing to fear, saying that it was only a matter of form, and off we went to the *Sûreté*.

"Sherlock" was busy—very busy.

"Have you any objections to having your photographs and fingerprints taken?" he asked.

As photographs of me were in most of the London newspaper files and Scotland Yard had my complete dossier, I could see no reason why Mr. "Sherlock" should not have them. Besides, the same thing applied to Bill and the rest of the crew. As one of the local C.I.D., the little man had to justify his existence, and this was his big chance.

When the formalities were over, I asked Mr. "Sherlock" if I could have a letter stating that he had taken our photographs and fingerprints. But this he declined to give, although he had previously agreed to do so. So the old adage about "never trusting a copper" once more proved true.

The next few days I spent getting to know our ship, and we did several short trips outside the harbour. She was a gem and handled beautifully.

Then I ordered all the ports to be blacked out and the name to be painted in dark red, so that identification would be difficult at sea once we started operating. Every night, too, I had discussions with various characters down in the Petit Socco with regard to contraband. The Socco was just as I had last seen it, for it never changes. It was the same colourful slum with its hundreds of bars,

cheap-jack traders' stalls, selling a myriad articles that no one wants. The same never-ending crowds of Arabs, the same women in full veils giving one the occasional "follow me" look. There one still met every nationality under heaven, sheltering either from some political régime or from the consequences of a crime committed in their own country. Water-sellers clang their bells, shoe-shine boys and paper-sellers and a host of others pester one's life out as one sits outside a bar having a drink. Beggars swarm everywhere. Small children suffering from congenital syphilis, deformed and crippled old men and crones descend upon one from every direction begging for alms. The heat and the ghastly smells overshadow everything.

In a small town like Tangier, rumour runs riot. It certainly played a nice game with us. Someone had spread it around that we were there to rob a bank, and guards armed with tommy-guns were posted outside all the banks. Then again the other contrabandiers were told that we were going to burn their ships, and one actually came to beg me to spare his particular craft. Another rumour had it that we had come to murder someone. Since all these yarns must have got back to dear "Sherlock", God alone knows what he thought!

At "Ma" Zecco's, in the Socco, one finds a dirty front bar, with good music and good drinks. Sailors, tarts, pansies and drunks make a hum of conversation. In a corner, a Spanish guitar strums out and a boy sings in a sweet treble the songs of the matadors. Everyone stamps their feet and snaps their fingers to the rhythm. Drinks are fast and furious. At three in the morning the night clubs pour out their saturated clientele in to Zecco's, and the air is heavy with the smell of sweat,

Spanish brandy and neurosis. Yes, you can literally smell that too!

This was the bar we drank in.

One night, I ran into a great friend of mine, Russ Ishmael, and his charming fiancée, Pat Collins. They were sight-seeing and had just drifted into "Ma" Zecco's place. One drunken Spaniard kept leaching Pat. His friends looked as though they were wanting trouble as well. Jackie Dewer, sitting quietly nearby, suddenly got up and told the Spaniard to sit down. A row ensued. A blow was struck. The Spaniard went flying through the door. The rest of the brave gang all ran. Dannie Lions tried to grab one of them by his shirt. The fellow was so frightened that he ran right out of it, leaving the tattered remnants in Dannie's hands.

Two boys run the Parade Bar in Tangier—Jay and Bill—and their food is quite the best in town. Theirs is an American bar and thronged with a cosmopolitan crowd. Here one meets everyone. And it was in the Parade that I met a delightful American banker, called Mr. Brown. He imparted the information that a good business was a Fidelity Insurance Company; a company that would guarantee that the employees of other firms—cashiers, clerks and the rest, would not abscond with the money. This to me was a splendid idea. Who better than us to investigate thefts? It seemed, too, like a legalized protection racket, which, after all, is what all insurance companies really are!

So I got busy and with the help of associates formed a company for £70,000. Then I took insurance offices in the Boulevard Pasteur and sent to England to have the policies printed on English lines. Telephones were installed, and my partners and I were in business—but not for long!

Meanwhile, propositions were pouring into us fast and furious. Some of them were quite extraordinary, for it is amazing when one has a ship and a crew that are prepared to do anything and go anywhere, what happens.

One morning, while I was lying in bed at the hotel, the telephone rang.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," the receptionist said.

"Who is it?" I asked.

She told me the name of a well-known English stock-broker and businessman. I had often seen his photographs in the *Tatler*, and guessed he frequented the plush clubs and night-spots in the West End. Having visions of some hot tips for the stock market, I jumped out of bed, put on a pair of pants and a shirt, and hurried down to the lounge.

There stood my friend, dressed as if he had just left the Stock Exchange in grey sponge-bag trousers, black coat and grey tie. He looked immaculate and carried a dispatch case.

"Mr. Chapman," he said, "can we talk somewhere in private? I have a proposition which may interest you."

I led him to a small writing-room, ordered coffee, offered him a cigarette and sat back to listen.

"Mr. Chapman, I have read your book, *The Eddie Chapman Story*, I know all about you and your friends, and I think you are the man for me. Are you interested in making some money?"

"How much and what for?" I asked him.

"Five thousand. I want you to kill my brother."

I nearly fell off my chair in surprise. I looked at him. He was absolutely calm, as though saying: "I advise you to buy War Loan, my dear boy."

"Well," I said, convinced that I was dealing with a crank or a lunatic, "Yes, I think we can do business.

But first of all, I never do business unless I'm paid a fee in advance."

"How much?"

"Five hundred," I said hopefully.

"Will you take it in dollars?"

"I'll take it in Chinese yen, if I can cash them," I replied.

He opened up his brief-case and passed me over 1,500 dollars, as I inwardly cursed myself. I am never very bright early in the morning. I am certain if I had asked for double the amount he would have given it to me.

Having handed over the cash, he started a tirade against his dear brother. Apparently, it was the old, old story. His brother had been sleeping with his wife. . . . Ah! Jealousy, who knows what crimes have been committed in thy name! . . .

He gave me all the details of where his brother lived, the clubs he frequented and so forth. Then he finished by saying: "My wife has a great deal of valuable jewellery and this is where she keeps it." Pointing to a diagram of the house which he had drawn, he said: "There in that bureau in that corner of her room. Take everything, Mr. Chapman, all I want to leave her are her eyes to cry with!"

When we had completed the plan for his brother's murder, he asked me: "Now, what shall I do?"

"Well, why not get on a plane to some quiet spot?" I suggested. "Then when you read about your brother's sudden demise, you can send me the rest of the money here and return to London."

"Good idea," he said. Then he gathered up his brief-case and shook me by the hand. "Well, Mr. Chapman, thank you and good luck," he smiled.

I sat back, pinched myself to see if I was really awake, counted the money and went off to see Bill. Together, we sat down and laughed until we were nearly sick!

"All we have to do now," I told Bill, "is to inform the brother, who is certain to give us another £500 not to murder him."

Then came another and even stranger proposition. At the time there was trouble in Morocco; bad trouble between the French and the Arabs. The old Sultan—a man much loved by the Arabs—Sidi Mohammed Ben Youssef, had been deposed and exiled by the French to Madagascar. The Nationals wanted him back as the present Sultan was a mere puppet in the hands and the pay of the French. Several attempts had already been made on his life, and I have no doubt that it is only a matter of time before one such attempt will succeed.

At that time, all the old-established Moroccan Arab families wanted the old Sultan back again, and both Egypt and Spain were quite openly in sympathy with them, while England refused to recognize his puppet successor. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that a number of people were prepared to pay highly either to see Ben Youssef safely back on his throne or at least installed in some friendly country from which he could organize Arab resistance.

Through mutual friends, I was taken to a meeting of fervent Arab Nationals, and I must say I was favourably impressed by them. They were fanatical in their outlook and obviously for them there could be no compromise. They wanted their Sultan back and were determined to have him—come what may.

As I sat sipping coffee, their tall, arrogant, handsome young leader put forward his plan, and it was a good one.

I had the ship and they would supplement my crew with their own trusted men; men who would die for the cause. We would sail down to Madagascar where I would contact the Sultan, persuade him and his sons to leave in the *Flamingo* and take the whole royal party to a rendezvous where a seaplane would be waiting to take them to a more friendly clime.

Money was no object.

Looking round at the intense, ardent faces about me, I felt in keen sympathy with them, for here were men eager to lay down their lives for an ideal.

I told them I would consider their proposition. They, in turn, promised to get in touch with Ben Youssef to find out if he was agreeable to the plan, and also guaranteed to give me as much information about him as possible.

I considered the situation carefully. What, I wondered, would be the attitude of the British Government? One could not even guess; in politics one can be a hero to-day and a traitor to-morrow. They are a dangerous game to play.

Late into the night I discussed the chances of getting the old Sultan away from Madagascar with Bill. I knew that the French Intelligence was an efficient organization in that part of the world. If we were to accomplish our mission successfully, then our contact and plans with the Nationalists must be cloaked in complete secrecy.

Bill and I agreed not to mention a word of our plans to the crew. Then we decided that our fee for the job would be £100,000, in addition to all the running expenses and initial outlay for *Flamingo*.

Our plan was to sail down to the Mauritius Islands, which were British possessions, on some minor smuggling activity, that would allay any suspicion on the part of the French as to our true mission.

I felt dubious about taking any of the Nationalists aboard with us. In my opinion they would be difficult to disguise, and I have always disliked using forged passports, for one never knows when some eagle-eyed emigration officer may not spot them and cause trouble. However, in the end, Bill and I agreed to take two of the Arabs along, provided they were suitably camouflaged.

I was not happy about the delivery of the Sultan, and told Bill so.

"If the Egyptian Government is willing and anxious to give the old man political sanctuary," I argued, "then undoubtedly they will be agreeable to collecting him off our ship. What I propose is that we should make a rendezvous with them somewhere in the Indian Ocean where they can meet us with either a seaplane or another vessel. When they hand over the £100,000, we hand over the Sultan. Otherwise, for political expediency, they may decide to get rid of us so that there is no evidence. Believe me, Bill," I added, "I like me, and I like me in one piece—so let's play the safe game."

To all this Bill gave his laconic: "O.K."

The following evening we met the Nationalists again at a prearranged rendezvous. This time, they had with them a representative of General Neguib. I explained to them the terms under which we were prepared to do business.

"Mr. Chapman," the Egyptian said, "supposing the Sultan is under heavy guard; how do you intend getting him away?"

"Aboard my ship," I told him, "I have the cream of London's underworld—desperate but highly skilled men. They are used to stealing money and jewellery from places that are heavily guarded. Between them they have been responsible for many of the major robberies in London

which has the reputation for having the finest police force in Europe. They can creep into places as silently as cats. Often they have carried off safes weighing several hundredweights, under the noses of unsuspecting guards. When your Sultan has gone to bed, if you warn him that we are coming, I have no doubt that he will prove less trouble than many of the jobs we have tackled."

"How many people will you use in this exploit?" asked one of the Arabs.

"As few as possible," I told him, adding that in my experience the more people involved in a job of this sort, the greater the chance of being caught.

"Probably myself and one other will be all I need," I said. "However, that can only be decided on the spot when I have assessed the difficulties and spied out the ground."

"I think, Mr. Chapman," the fellow insisted, "that in such an important undertaking you should take as many highly armed men as you can, then in event of any trouble with the guards you can shoot them."

"I'm sorry," I told him, "but I think what you suggest is madness. At the first shot, you can say good-bye to the chances of ever getting the Sultan away. Even if you did succeed in getting him aboard, the French Navy would have you before you were out of sight of land. Besides," I added firmly, "I don't like murder and won't be party to it."

"Yes, yes, I quite realize that," he agreed. "But this would not be murder, Mr. Chapman. Remember, a state of war exists between the Arab Nationalists and the French."

"I know," I answered him, "but that has nothing to do with me. I'm a British subject and I've no wish to shake hands with Madame Guillotine. If we succeed in getting the Sultan aboard and *en route* for Egypt, and happen to

be chased by the French beyond their territorial waters, I'm quite in order to repel any boarders by force. Therefore, I would like a few sten guns and, if possible, some smoke bombs—they're useful for disappearing tactics."

"How are you going to pay us the money?" Bill interposed, bringing the discussion down to brass tacks.

"You have no need to worry about that," was the answer. "Send one of the Arabs. You will be treated as heroes throughout the Arab world."

"We don't want the heroes' stuff," Bill said. "We want the money. We will hand over the Sultan at sea—against payment."

After a great deal of discussion, our friends told us that the matter would have to go to a higher level, since they themselves had not the power to take a decision.

Then I made one last point before I left.

"If we stay in harbour and do nothing while waiting for you to complete your plans, someone will get suspicious," I argued. "Therefore, I'm going to do a smuggling run. Firstly, we need the money, secondly, it will put off anyone who suspects that we're out for bigger game."

They all agreed to this plan and promised to give me their answer in a couple of weeks.

Meanwhile, there had been trouble aboard *Flamingo* that necessitated changing the skipper. I replaced him with Will Kentish, who had been captain of the old *Earl Grey*. Will was the ideal fellow for the job, for, in addition to his "mind your own business and I will mind mine" attitude towards life, he spoke six languages fluently—French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and Flemish. He was also an expert on radio, television and radar. Besides all this, he was a good captain.

With Will Kentish arrived my wife, Betty, and as we were expecting an addition to the Chapman family, I moved into the Riff Hotel, one of Tangier's luxury hotels.

Will set to work aboard *Flamingo* at once. He repaired the direction-finding gear and mended the ship-to-shore radio, neither of which had been working since she arrived. Next, we fitted three extra fuel tanks on deck that gave us a range of some 3,000 miles. Finally, we stocked up with food and water.

We were now ready for our first assignment.

We had agreed to run 800 cases of cigarettes up the coast.

Cigarettes can be bought in Tangier for 5*d.* a packet. They sell in the Mediterranean countries for 3*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* per packet. So it is clear that someone makes a large profit when one remembers that each case of cigarettes contains 100 cartons, and each carton, ten packets of cigarettes. Small wonder that this is the main industry of Tangier!

We sailed on a Friday night. That morning, two British submarines came into Tangier. I was standing on the mole when a cheery voice shouted: "Hi, you! Put that rope round that forward bollard."

Then a whisper that could be heard all over the ship's intercom system muttered: "I suppose that wog doesn't understand what the hell I'm talking about!"

I made the rope fast and within a matter of minutes both subs were neatly secured with wonderful precision.

The commander, a bearded mariner who looked as if he had been reared on salt from babyhood, stepped ashore.

"Do you speak English?" he asked.

"Well, I should," I laughed, "It's my native country—I think!"

He grinned and said: "Sorry, old man. I thought you were an Arab. That's a nice suntan you've got. Come and have a drink, and thanks for helping with our lines."

I went aboard the sub and was introduced to a bunch of damned nice blokes. All of them looked fit despite an under-water temperature of 90 degrees. Later, they all came across to *Flamingo* and extended an invitation to all the crew to come to a cocktail party that same night.

As the guests arrived aboard the sub, I decided that sailors were really good judges of women, for it seemed that every good-looking girl in Tangier was there.

It was a blowy evening and the boys aboard *Flamingo* all cheered when the wind played havoc with skirts, revealing to an admiring audience the promise of things to come!

That cocktail party was still going strong when we weighed anchor and took our silent departure. It is always a sound policy to leave Tangier at night when the police spies and the narks cannot see where one is going.

Our destination lay some 800 miles from Tangier and we had to run the gauntlet of the gun-boats patrolling outside.

Watches were arranged to give each watch three hours on and six off. The engine-room staff fared worse, for they had to do six on and six off. With contraband aboard, one must stay at sea whatever the weather and despite mechanical breakdowns. If one puts into any port, the cargo will be seized, and one suffers heavy fines as well as imprisonment.

On board we had a supercargo, whose job it was to pilot us up a narrow channel to our rendezvous. Nothing untoward happened on the way, except that we had to dodge a couple of patrol craft that caused us to steer well off our course.

As we were approaching our destination ahead of time, we reduced speed. All lights were doused. Everyone was tense for this was their first adventure. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the funnel started belching sparks. It looked like a firework display in the darkness, and we had to practically shut off the port engine before it ended.

On the bridge, the supercargo was giving directions as we neared the harbour entrance. Silently, we ghosted in. Then the rays from a powerful lighthouse picked us up, and a passenger ship, blazing with lights, suddenly appeared a little astern, heading for the harbour. It was too late to turn back. At that moment, everything I had ever heard about smugglers and smuggling flashed through my mind. I knew from friends that often different "rings" in Tangier would offer one a cargo back and one-third of the proceeds of the sale of the vessel. I stepped alongside the supercargo. He was our only link. If this was a sell-out, then I was determined to chuck him overboard and make a dash for it!

On each side of the channel we could see the lights of the houses in the town. The supercargo pointed ahead. "Make for that centre light," he said. "It's a small, uninhabited island."

Meanwhile, the passenger ship was still coming up astern of us, to port, but was still some 100 yards away. We dared not increase speed or alter course. There were rocks ahead on each side of us. Obviously, the ship astern was puzzled by our silhouette that obscured the shore lights for her. First, she altered course slightly to starboard, and then over to port.

"It's all right," said the supercargo. "The captain's a friend of mine. He's an old smuggler himself—he knows the game!"

I did not feel so certain and sweat trickled down my armpits. We were fifty yards from the little island when the supercargo ordered the engines to be stopped. Then he crept forward with a darkened torch, peered intently into the night and flashed a pencilbeam in the direction of the island. There was no answer.

We waited, tense and silent. Then there was a faint answering flicker.

"My friends are here," he whispered.

A motor launch started up.

"Right, boys," I muttered, "Uncover the hatches. Get the cigarettes on deck."

Working like beavers, the boys dragged off the hatch covers and piled the cases on deck. The launch came alongside. In it were a tough bunch of characters.

"Tell them to stay off my ship," I said, still feeling a little suspicious that it might be a frame-up.

From hand to hand the cargo went over the side in feverish haste. I looked at the supercargo.

"What about the rest of the money?" I asked. "Part of the deal in Tangier was that I got half the money when I loaded and the balance on arrival."

"Yes, yes, monsieur," he answered. "But let us finish unloading first."

"No, give me the money now," I said firmly, and then shouted down to the boys in the launch to stop unloading.

The supercargo called out something to the men in the launch and up came a scruffy-looking individual. We went aft to my cabin. A roll of banknotes was produced. I started to count them.

"You're £300 short," I said.

Then something else caught my eye. We were being paid in dollars. I looked carefully at the bills. They were in hundreds and fifties. Six of the hundreds were forgeries!

I grabbed for my pocket and produced a large spring knife. Dannie followed suit. I stuck the blade in the supercargo's throat. Dannie did the same to his fellow. Both of them let out squeals like frightened rabbits.

"Listen," Dannie said, "one more trick like that and you and your chum ain't going to see or smoke any more cigarettes."

They fished hurriedly in their pockets and produced some more good dollar bills. But they were still 400 dollars short.

"O.K.," I said, "then we'll fine you twenty cases."

Twenty cases of cigarettes are forty dollars a case in Tangier. So I knew that the least I could sell them for was thirty-five dollars.

The bright pair pleaded, cried and appealed to my honour as a gentleman. But I was adamant.

"Look, you two, you made a bargain with us. You broke it. Now it's our turn."

They retired on deck and unloading started again.

I kept those twenty cases. When everything was finished, I said good-bye to the supercargo, telling him that I would hold the cigarettes for a week in Tangier. If he failed to pay me, I would sell them.

Their launch crept away from the ship and disappeared into the night. We set a course for Tangier. I felt elated and so did the boys. A few more miles and we would be at sea and out of danger. Our first mission had been a complete success. But nevertheless, we took all precautions. Unfortunately, Will Kentish had no large-scale charts for the channel down which we were steaming. Suddenly, we found ourselves bearing down on a red light marking some rocks. I rang down "full astern". We missed the rocks by inches as I swung the *Flamingo* back on her course.

With the lighthouse abeam, we were in safe waters, and I ordered all navigation lights to be switched on, ringing down for full speed. After the sullen darkness, the little ship was a blaze of light, and off we went with both engines screaming at their full 2,000 revs. I blessed the makers of Greys for those reliable engines beneath me.

Soon we reached the open sea. It was a beautiful night—a night when rogues and nature blend into harmony. Peace and sleep!

The next morning, Will told me that the glass had fallen suddenly and that strong northerly gales were forecast. This was bad news for with twenty cases of cigarettes still aboard we could not put in for shelter.

It was not long before the wind rose to gale force and the steep seas lashed the little *Flamingo*. But in spite of the fact that she was some seven tons short of ballast, she behaved amazingly. She took everything that Old Man Sea flung at her, licked it and came up for more!

The sea, to me, is like a strong and beautiful woman. She makes one's life a heaven, one eats the lotus. Then, when one least expects it, she gives one hell. She becomes an angry virago, screaming and spitting with rage. God help the man who under-estimates her!

"Steady, my beauty," I shouted to *Flamingo* above the roar and rattle of the wind, as I struggled to keep her on course.

Night was falling, but still the gale persisted. We had fought it for ten hours and were tired and exhausted. Since no pot would stay on the stove in the galley, it was impossible to cook a meal. One of the boys, Jackie Dewar, was nearly brained by a lamp that swung loose from its fitting and missed him by a fraction.

At last, Will recognized the Berlings—a lighthouse well off the Portuguese coast—and we decided to look for

a lee. But the night was darker than hell and in the flying spray and spindrift it was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. We missed the red light that warned of a group of fanglike rocks to the south of the Berlings. All at once, we were in the middle of them and life jackets were hurriedly produced and the searchlight on the bridge switched on. There were rocks all round us against which the seas were breaking in a cloud of spume and spray. Then, suddenly, we were in calm water, and with sighs of relief sighted a cluster of fishing vessels and other small craft sheltering from the weather. Amongst them we dropped anchor.

What a feeling of relief it is after being battered around in a gale to have a quiet cup of tea and something hot to eat! From the deck I watched the fishing craft snuggled together and rolling in the swell. The lighthouse flashed its friendly two million candle-power light above us. High cliffs protected us from the raging gale.

Next morning, since the storm had not abated, we decided to lie where we were, under the shelter of the Berlings that is just a huge chunk of rock with a lighthouse on it. It is about half a mile in circumference and on it there is a little bar, a restaurant which opens in the summer and a small hotel. Nothing grows there, but the lighthouse keepers breed a few chickens and goats.

Soon we had callers aboard. An old man and his two sons appeared to trade some lobsters. For a couple of cartons of cigarettes we were given about ten lobsters—great, big juicy ones! From the fishing boats we collected an assortment of delicious fish and soon the wholesome smell of cooking filled the air. Cunninghams and Les Ambassadeurs had nothing on us! We made our own *bouillabaisse*. Each of us ate a couple of lobsters to start with and topped off the meal with cold beer.

Later, we lowered the dinghy and set out to explore the island, where the lighthouse keeper and his assistants showed us the working of the great light and the huge generators that supplied the power for the light that cast a twenty-mile beam. They showed us too their weather station and told us that on the following morning the weather would be fair.

We arrived back in Tangier without incident, meeting our friends of the submarine on the way, bound for the Clyde and a re-fit. On the Aldis lamp I signalled them: "Bon voyage from *Flamingo*".

From the quay, Billy Hill greeted us with a big smile. He had been worried in case anything had happened to us, as for security reasons we had not communicated with him. Soon we were sitting together in the Parade Bar, while I recounted to Bill and Betty the events of our first contraband voyage.

Bill had not been idle during my absence, having met the Arab Nationalists on several occasions.

"I don't like the way they behave," he told me. "They're like a bunch of school-kids. They have no discretion and arrive at the hotel quite openly and discuss things over the telephone. I'm certain the French are suspicious as I'm being shadowed by some peculiar-looking gentlemen. By the way, we have a meeting with them to-night. They have promised to give us £3,000 in advance for expenses, so it looks as though they mean business," Bill added.

That evening when Bill and I took a taxi up into the Petit Socco, we were tailed by two men; one an obvious Arab, the other a Frenchman. The Arab was dressed in native costume and his companion in a smart European suit. They stuck to us like glue.

We went into Le Chat Noir, one of the brothels.

"Book two of the girls and come upstairs," I said to Bill.

As we were climbing the stairs, I saw our two friends arrive. They made their way to the bar, ordered drinks and sat down to await our reappearance.

"Have you a side entrance?" I asked the girls.

"Si, si," they answered.

"Here's 500 pesetas. Show us the way, then go and sit in your rooms for ten minutes," I said. "After that go down to the bar. If anyone asks where we have gone, just say we've left."

We went down the stairs and unlocked a small door. Standing on the step was a tall chap, lounging against the doorpost. He looked up guiltily as he saw us.

"Have you a match?" Bill asked him.

The man put his hand in his pocket.

Crack! Bill hit him on the jaw, and for good measure, I caught him one, too. We dragged him in, laid him on the stairs and dashed out into the maze of the Socco.

"Hope he was one of them," Bill laughed. "Anyway, we can't afford to take chances."

We arrived at our rendezvous without further hitch. It was a small villa furnished in the Moroccan style and in the lounge we were introduced to the twenty Arabs who were waiting for us.

"Jesus!" Bill muttered. "Why don't they all bring their grandmothers as well?"

A dignified old Arab who must have been over ninety years old was at the head of the delegation.

"Shush!" I whispered, "let them finish their yap first."

The old Arab looked over in Billy's direction and said with a twinkle and in impeccable English for the first time, "I believe the gentleman is disturbed about the money."

Billy was silenced!

"Gentlemen," the old man continued in French, "we have carefully considered your proposals for the rescue of our beloved Sultan and we think you stand a good chance of success. We are not yet ready, and will not be for some three weeks. The delay is due to the difficulty of keeping the Sultan informed of our plans and because we must have his authority to proceed. As a sign of our good faith, here is £3,000. We have arranged for your ship to draw arms from mutual friends of ours in Barcelona. There you can also refuel and take on any stores you may require. Your appointment is one month from to-day, when all preparations and instructions will be given you in Spain. We do, however, beg of you to supplement your crew with at least ten of our own men," he added earnestly. ^

"No", I told him. "With all due respect to you, sir, the risk would be too great. It would arouse suspicion if I had so many aboard. Two is the maximum I can take. I do not need them and would rather sail without them, but since you insist that the Sultan must have a guard, then I bow to your wishes, and will take two. Now may I know who they are?" I asked.

A hurried conference in Arabic followed, that was obviously a squabble to determine who should have the honour of accompanying us.

Bill looked at me. "What the hell are they all yapping about?" he asked. "Why don't they cut the cackle and give us the f——ing money?"

Since it was their only language other than Arabic, the whole of our conversation had been held in French, and poor Bill had been rather left in the cold. I explained rapidly what had happened.

"Get hold of that f——ing £3,000," Bill said, pointing to the thick rolls of pesetas that lay on the table.

I walked over, took the money, put it in my pockets and

everyone seemed too preoccupied to offer any comment.

"Mr. Chapman," said the chairman, "we would like you to make the choice between these four gentlemen."

Four young Arabs stood up. They all looked beseechingly at me. There was nothing to choose between them. They were all fit and looked as though they were ready to go through fire and water for their cause.

"We have an English custom," I said "that fits a situation of this sort. We spin for it." Producing a coin, I explained to them the mysteries of "heads and tails".

I spun the coin between the first two.

"Heads!" called one. It was. The winner looked as if he had won the Irish Sweep. The loser as though his wife had died.

Again I spun the coin. "Tails!" said one of the other two. Again, dutifully, the coin turned tails up.

"O.K.," I said. "One month from to-day we all meet in Barcelona. You two men will be signed on as deckhands. You will be expected to work like the rest of the crew. You will sleep in one of the holds, and no one except Mr. Hill and myself will know your identity or the reason why you are aboard. From now on, I do not think it advisable to have any more contact between us until we make out final arrangements in Barcelona."

All our points having been agreed, we shook hands formally, and with *bonne chance* echoing in our ears, we left.

About this time the local papers were full of the impending visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to Gibraltar. The Spaniards were kicking up a row because they had been barred from the Rock, and most of the riots that occurred earlier in Tangier were said to have been inspired by the Spanish Government, with

the result that feelings ran high. The day after the Queen's visit, we were returning from Ma Zecco's when a party of Spaniards started hurling insults at us. One, the obvious ringleader, picked up a brick and threatened Jackie Dewer.

"English pigs! English Queen no good! Tangier belong Spain! Gibraltar belong Spain!" they yelled.

Jackie stopped in his tracks. The big ape came forward, brandishing his brick. Then he made a sudden lunge at Jackie. A quick side-step, a right hook to the jaw, and an astonished Spaniard dropped as though he had been felled with an anchor. I walked over to him. He looked as if he was dead. The others turned and ran.

"Sling him in the dock," Billy Hill said.

Instead, we dropped him over the sea wall, but he knew nothing about it.

When we got back to *Flamingo*, the skipper came down below to see us.

"I don't know what's happening," he said, "but a crowd of chaps seem to be trying to creep up on the ship."

We all got hold of any implement that was handy; Gerald Bull, a spanner, Billy Hill, a bread knife; Dannie, an old sword; Ted Arthurs, a shellelagh; myself, a length of lead piping. Then, silently we squirmed along the deck on our stomachs.

"Don't move," Bill said, "till I say. Then charge the bastards!"

We counted twenty-five of them, all in small groups, and all creeping along the sea wall. When they were near enough, Bill shouted: "Charge!"

The charge of the Light Brigade had nothing on us. Blows were struck fast and furious. I hit one fellow and down he went, my lead piping curled round his head. Bill was sitting on another's chest, trying to saw off his

head with his bread knife. Dannie was dealing out some nice blows in the approved Errol Flynn manner.

But we had not come out unscathed. Ernie Wilson was hit behind the ear with a spanner and Gerry Bull had his head split open with a poker. All the same, our opponents were going down like nine-pins. In the end, they broke and fled up into the Socco. We chased them and caught three more of them. The old Marquis of Queensbury would have turned in his grave to have seen so many of his rules broken! Triumphantlly we returned to *Flamingo*.

After the ball—the bill! Next morning, it was not long before it was presented. A telephone call from the *Sûreté* requesting that we should kindly present ourselves there at two o'clock.

Once more, dear Mr. "Sherlock" Holmes presided. He always looked worried, but now his expression was ulcerous. One of his minions took me into another room and said: "You speak French, no? Will you kindly translate this to your friends, and then read it yourself and sign it."

I read the document that he handed to me, it was a masterpiece.

"By order of the Sultan of Morocco, and in consultation with his advisers, Edward Chapman was ordered to leave Tangier at 19.00 hours, in order not to provoke a breach of Public Order."

I read it to the boys, who were swathed in bandages and covered in cuts and bruises as well as sporting some handsome black eyes. Then I signed the document and went to see my banker friend, Brown.

"Who's the best lawyer in town?" I asked him.

"Izzie Levy," he told me.

"O.K.," I said. "Can you get him on the phone?"

I went round to see Mr. Levy and asked him if the police were within their rights to expel us without any form of charge being preferred.

"Here", he said, "they make their own laws, and God alone knows how to interpret them! I was born here, but every day is a constant surprise to me. If they want to expel me, they could. There is no appeal—nothing."

We went together to the British Consulate, and Levy who knew the Consul said: "You had better wait outside while I ask him for an interview."

"At least," I said, "ask him for a little more time. The ship's engines are being repaired and we have no food or water aboard. Also my wife is at the Riff Hotel and I would like to make arrangements about her."

I waited for nearly an hour before Levy returned.

"Sorry," he said, "the Consul sees no reason to interfere with the directions of the Sultan."

We went back to see Brown, who telephoned dear Mr. "Sherlock". Since it was impossible for us to leave that evening without fuel, it was agreed that we should clear Tangier the following morning.

Back at the police station things were going fine. Someone on someone else's instructions, had locked the door on the crew. Ernie Wilson wanted to go to the lavatory. The strong-arm man of "Sherlock" barred the way, pushing Ernie back into the room.

"Listen, you makeshift apology," Ernie said, "step aside or I'll punch a hole in you!"

The copper, although he did not understand English, understood Ernie's clenched fist. He ran into "Sherlock's" office like a frightened schoolboy.

"This man is threatening me!" he shouted.

Out came "Sherlock". "You ferocious looking man," he yelled, "don't you dare threaten my policeman!"

"Me? Ferocious?" Ernie choked, "What about that pug-ugly there? He ain't exactly an oil-painting. In any case, I haven't done anything, and I'm not going to be locked up. If you want to lock us up, bring the rest of your comic police force."

Luckily, I arrived just in time, for the boys were getting quite het up.

Sherlock appealed to me. "Mr. Chapman," he said. "I have my duty to perform. We don't want any trouble."

"O.K., boys," I said. "Sign these forms and let's go."

We all signed. Outside the police station were several anxious-looking policemen. We grinned at them and left. The triumphant march of the gladiators could not have held a candle to us as we returned to *Flamingo*.

Back at the Riff Hotel, Bill and I had a call-over. Betty was naturally upset, but she knows me by now, and like the great little sport she is, kept back her tears.

I got out the charts. "This is where I should like to go," I said to Bill, pointing to Sicily. "I know it well, have friends there, and we can do some business."

"O.K.," Bill said. "Suits me."

The next morning at eight o'clock, I kissed Betty *au revoir* and took a taxi down to the harbour with Bill. Everything was a buzz of activity. *Flamingo* was being refuelled, while alongside on the quay there was a strong guard of police. The numerous bands of contrabandiers seemed glad that we were going, and as we weighed anchor, mock cheers and waves came from our audience.

"Never mind," I thought, "we'll be back some day."

Four hours later we put into Ceuta, in Spanish Morocco for water supplies. It is a charming, sleepy little port, filled with beautiful girls, where no one hurries and one can eat the lotus.

In the morning, I heard an American voice shout:

"Anyone aboard?" I went up on deck and saw two Americans standing there. They looked at me, and I at them. They were immaculately turned out, while I had on a dirty pair of flannels in which I slept at sea.

"We're from a syndicate in America," they said, mentioning the name of a famous press association.

"How the hell did you know we were here?" I demanded.

"Oh, we bribed a telephone girl in Tangier, and when you rang your wife at the Riff, she told us," they confessed without shame.

"Well," I asked, "what can I do for you?"

"Someone at our Head Office told us you were going to the Far East. Is it true?" One of them asked.

"Well, it could be," I said, for I had been toying with the idea.

"If you are," they said, "can we give you an assignment?"

Then they produced a contract which I read. It was for a stipulated number of articles and the pay was good. The places mentioned in it were, as far as I knew, practically inaccessible. Besides, there was a war going on out there.

However, I signed, and after we had had a drink, they left us.

At lunch-time, I had another visitor—a Belgian whom I had met in Tangier. He had owned a ship, but she had been seized by the Customs. Now he was broke and working as a barman at the Ja Ti Ti. His proposition was interesting.

An Italian group were looking for a ship and a crew to do some regular smuggling. He told me what they were prepared to pay, and, as one of the conditions was that we should meet them in Genoa, he agreed to come along to effect the introductions. So we signed him on as cook.

The next day we sailed for Alicante, *en route* for Genoa. Alicante was ablaze with colour when we arrived for the fiesta of Saint Peter was in progress. Bands were playing, guns were being fired, boatloads of gaily dressed excursionists waved to us as we swung into the little bedecked harbour. A host of small craft had arrived across from Cannes to see the fun.

As soon as we moored, out came a crowd of officials, Customs, police and port authorities. They obviously knew all about us for they searched *Flamingo* from stem to stern—drawing a blank, of course,

Then came the questions. Why had we come? Where were we going? What were we doing? To all I replied that I had heard so much of Alicante, its beauties, its courteous officials and its wonderful fiesta that we had decided to see it all for ourselves.

We gave them all drinks and cigarettes. They drank and were very polite. Did we mind, they asked, if they left two police on board the ship? It was simply a matter of rules and regulations. I said, of course not, if they did not object to sleeping on deck. Then we all shook hands. We drank Franco's health. We drank everyone's health. Everyone was happy. We were invited to a bull fight, a firework display, a dance, a brothel, a swimming tournament. Then our friends departed, leaving behind two heavily armed militia men. They looked exactly like German military policemen and they took me back to the good old days when I was marching for "Der Führer!"

We all got dressed and, although I say it myself, the boys were not a bad-looking bunch. White flannels and yachting caps were the rig of the day, and soon we were getting the old eye-eye from the Spanish beauties.

I suppose everyone has read about those bold, raven-haired, flashing-eyed Spanish lovelies. Well, it's true;

brother, those eyes! Unfortunately their escorts are a jealous bunch, so one has to watch the eyes and one's back at the same time, for they have a nasty habit of slipping a knife into you if you are too familiar.

The streets of Alicante were crowded. There was dancing in the squares and outside the cafés. Fireworks banged. The air was alive with noise and happy laughter and soon we were in the middle of it. At one place we got the band to play a horn-pipe and Will Kentish, having had a few, started to dance. All the boys joined in. So did the girls. It was the funniest sight I have seen for years; a cross between a horn-pipe, the "Lambeth Walk" and a Spanish fandango. The crowd played castinets and snapped their fingers and shouted "Ole!" while our boys retaliated with "Up your Father" and "Down the old Kent Road". The authorities of Alicante certainly put on a show. In different parts of the town, in the squares and open spaces, they had set up huge effigies in wax, wood and paper, depicting all kinds of scenes from life. A prize being given to the borough making the best set of effigies.

At midnight these figures were set alight, and, as some of them were as large or even larger than the houses surrounding them, it was an awe-inspiring sight. Hundreds of rockets and fire crackers were set off to the cheers of the thousands of sightseers thronging the little town. Bands blared every tune under the sun and everyone carried rattles and wore paper hats. We all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves!

Next morning, I had the devil's own hangover for that Spanish wine has a kick and an after-kick! The boys looked pretty seedy too. After ten cups of tea each, we groaned, got our clearance papers and set sail.

En route, the weather being fine and having some little

time to kill, I decided to put into the famous Isle de Levante, some fifty miles from Cannes. When the boys heard my decision, they were delighted, for they had all heard about this famous island of nudists.

"What's the penalty for rape?" Jackie Dewer cracked.

"You get the French Medal of Merit," I told him, "presented by the President himself."

As we approached the island, the glasses were much in demand and we could make out the naked forms of several mermaids sporting on the beach. When we were a hundred yards or so off shore, three of us, all as Mother Nature made us, dived overboard and soon we were clambering on to the rocks, where a welcoming committee was waiting. One little French girl stood there like a sea nymph, daintily poised, offering us grapes. I believe Adam was proffered an apple. Good old Adam, I don't blame him for falling! Personally, if there is any temptation about I always fall for it!

Soon we were in the midst of the fun and frolic and the moment we anchored the boys were all ashore. Several of them came in shorts, only to be greeted with cries of: "Au poil! Au poil!"

Everyone had to bow to the island convention and soon nobbly knees and delicate bosoms were blending together with the blue of the Mediterranean. Ah, bliss! How fleeting are your moments, but what memories you leave!

We tried to book in at a small hotel but it was full. We had all "drink taken" and as we returned, we saw a delightful little church. In a small outhouse we found some straw palliasses and in a matter of minutes were comfortably installed in the church. The night was perfect. The moonlight glittered on the crucifix on the altar. I looked round at my bunch of villains. All were lying

on their backs—thinking. God seemed close at hand in that secluded corner, where several of his most miserable sinners were silently praying.

Marcel, the Belgian, woke us with a cup of coffee which he had foraged from some nearby campers. We had a quick collection amongst ourselves that I hope did not too astonish the Padre when he opened his collection box. I gave a pound, Bill ten dollars, Frannie 2,000 pesetas, the others various sums in the currencies of all the countries they had visited.

Just as we were leaving the beach, up came a well-known London figure, Barry Thornhill.

"Heard you were on the island, Eddie," he said. "Meet Miss de Vere."

It is a funny thing about Barry, he is the best-dressed man I know and he always has the best-looking women. In fact, the only time I can remember Barry being off women was when he was twelve years old and his nurse hit him over the head with a broom. That put him off women for two whole years!

Barry having given us the latest news from London, we said good-bye and set off for Cannes. We arrived there at four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon. The harbour was packed with fashionable yachts from all over the world. Some of them were little better than floating cocktail bars that I am quite sure were utterly unseaworthy. They looked as though they should have been kept in glass cases, with their dainty little fenders, dainty little sails and dainty little launches. Some of them even had two butlers in tails, serving the iced drinks! When we arrived with our old tyres as fenders and the paint peeling off our sides, we got the old eyebrows raised.

"Smugglers, my dear fellow! Smugglers!"

Better to be that, I thought, than just smug. Then I

gave Cannes a new name—"Where live the living dead."

I called at the Normandy Hotel to see Alfred Hitchcock and Cary Grant who were making "To Catch a Thief". Cary had been cast to play me in the film version of my book, *The Eddie Chapman Story*. Unfortunately, they had both left for Paris the previous day.

After a meal in a small restaurant near the fashionable Martenez, we all trooped back to *Flamingo*. On the way, we passed Bouchérons, the famous jewellers.

"Look at that!" Dannie said, his mouth watering.

The window was ablaze with jewels and right in the middle of it was a blue-white solitaire diamond, weighing at least eighteen carats.

"If only we had a car," groaned one of the boys. "That must be worth £15,000 of anyone's money!"

"I know just how long it would be in anyone's window if this was London—not another two minutes!" another of the boys laughed.

"That's putting temptation in the way of the public!" Gerry grumbled.

I hurried them off before the weakness of the flesh succumbed.

Back on board *Flamingo*, I found that Marcel, the Belgian, had not been inactive. He had picked up a delectable little French piece of nonsense who was on holiday. She was busy inspecting my cabin, clad only in a pair of cami-knicks. Unfortunately, we could not take her to Savona or spend any more time in Cannes. So we put her ashore and set sail once more.

The reception committee was out in force to greet us at Savona. We were escorted into harbour by two Customs launches and moored alongside the quay facing the town.

It is a dull place, Savona; there is not much life nor is

the town of any particular interest. But we certainly livened it up.

Immediately we were tied up, on came the police. Passports were checked and rechecked. There was a good deal of confusion over mine; why, I was asked, did I have two birthplaces on my passport? I explained that one was the village, Burnopfield, and the other the name of the county where I was born. This, I said, was quite a normal procedure in England.

Next came the questions. Why? What? Where? Who? I gave the stock answers to all of them. Having heard of Savona, its beauty and renown, we had decided to pay it a visit. They all smiled and looked at me disbelievingly. Then they searched the ship and searched us, and after hours of fruitless ferreting, they departed.

I breathed again; at least we had not been expelled! Bill and I got dressed and decided to move into the Hotel Astoria, which as Savona hotels go, was not bad. When our luggage was ready, we ordered a taxi. A camouflaged police car with four of the local C.I.D. followed us at a discreet distance. I looked at Bill. We both sighed.

"At least," he grinned, "there's no chance of anyone robbing us!"

After a bath and a shave, we set off to explore the town with our escort in attendance. Soon we started a nice game with them. We would double back on our tracks. The detectives would wait and then walk self-consciously down the street. Then it was our turn to follow them. When they turned, we did the same thing. Finally, we went back to *Flamingo*.

Back on board, the boys told us the same story. They had gone for a stroll and each of them had a couple of detectives on his tail. Royalty could not have been better guarded than we were. Opposite the ship was a row of

dockside houses in which the blouziest tarts offered their services. Soon we received friendly warnings. Our grapevine began working. Police were following us and everyone was asking: "Why?" We spread the wildest and most outrageous rumours. We had a prince of royal blood on board who was incognito; we were his personal advisers, so the police were guarding our august persons. Then the reporters came, not singly, but in swarms. They vied with one another in inventing stories as to *Flamingo's* true mission. One said that I was the official buyer for the Guatemalan Government and that we had come to purchase arms in order to start a rebellion in Morocco.

All these fantastic stories were quite seriously reported in the Italian Press. As a result of them, sightseers began appearing on the quayside in their hundreds.

"Hell!" said Bill, "let's dress the crew up in uniform and charge 100 lira to look round the ship. We'll make a bloody fortune!"

One Italian reporter who did not speak a word of English when he called, afterwards wrote that in the captain's cabin he had spotted a fearsome looking pistol. In fact, this was an ordinary Very-light pistol that is part of the ship's normal equipment.

Particular interest was shown in Jackie Dewer, so we issued a challenge to Mitri, the Italian middleweight champion, for a £1,000 side bet. I believe that Jackie would have slaughtered Mitri, for he was now double-dyed fit and his eyes were much better. In my opinion, he is a much better prospect than Turpin—but we are yet waiting to hear from Mitri.

To pass the time away, for we were still waiting for our Italian associates to contact us, we invented a number of games to play with the police. All the boys would leave the ship separately, and, heading in different directions,

set off on long walks into the country. Jackie would put on his training rig and go for runs round Savona, followed by two sweating policemen. Often he had to halt for them to catch up with him. But soon they got wise to the game and the C.I.D. issued them with bicycles and Vespa motorscooters. It was all great fun, enjoyed by the police and ourselves.

At last, I got word that our Italian people were ready to meet us in Genoa. Shaking off the law by the simple process of jumping first into one taxi and then another, walking along the beach, jumping a bus and then a tram, Bill and I arrived in Genoa without our usual escort.

Under the statue of Columbus outside the main railway station, we met our contact. Then we went by car through the town to a small bar.

The Italians looked a thoroughly tough bunch as we sat round a table. After the usual preamble, they told us the business that they wanted us to do. Dope! That was the one thing Bill and I would not touch. So we declined the offer and returned to Savona.

At the railway station there, the police again picked us up and tailed us to the hotel. At the latter I found a telegram telling me that Ken Smith, of the *Sunday Chronicle*, was arriving. Ken was a good friend of mine. We meet in clubs, for Ken gets around and so do I. He told me that he had come with a proposition from the Kemsley Press. The latter wanted to run a story on the *Flamingo*, as did a lot of other papers. But, as I knew Ken, I invited him to make the next stage of the passage with us. I declined to tell him where we were going and it was with a certain amount of misgivings that he finally agreed to come.

Next morning, Bill, Ken and I went down to *Flamingo*. Hundreds of people thronged the quayside. Press photographers, reporters and even a unit from the Italian TV.

were there. We climbed aboard and Jackie Dewer came to me and said that a "bloody copper" was waiting to see me.

In the cabin was a resplendent figure wearing a brand new uniform and a broad smile, whom I took to be a very senior officer in the local police.

"Ah, Mr. Chapman, I am come just calling to say *au revoir* and *bon voyage*," he laughed. "I hope my police have not inconvenienced you and your friends. But orders, you know, must be obeyed."

I thanked him and said that we had not only enjoyed our stay but that it was nice of him to give us police protection.

"Can we have a photograph together?" he begged. "You know this is an historical occasion for me."

"Certainly," I said, and we went aft where the photographers started snapping us shaking hands.

After that, the police officer left the ship and I gave the order to cast off. The crowd waved and there were loud cheers. All the girls who had met the boys shed a few tears and the cameras turned. Suddenly I had a brain-wave. I dived down below and got hold of a small depth charge. Quickly I lit it and threw it through a porthole, then dashed up on deck again. On the quay the police officer and his satellites were still waving like mad. Then, when we were some fifty yards off, the explosion happened. Boom! Crash! Everyone ducked and started running in all directions.

"Hell!" Ken hollered. "What was that? Has the bloody ship blown up?"

"Full speed ahead!" I shouted, and a few minutes later we were out in the open sea.

It soon became obvious to me after we left Savona that Bill was working up something. I could sense the tension

in the atmosphere. There could be no mistaking it. Occasionally, when I came on to the bridge, catching Bill alone with Arthurs, I saw that his face wore a hard, inscrutable expression. I began to wonder.

Months ago, there had been bad blood between those two. Both of them came from north London. Billy had graduated to the West End as leader of a gang of tear-aways. He had taken over the "speilers" or gambling joints in Soho. This had led to a savage gang warfare that was fought out in the clubs, on the streets and at race meetings, and the casualties had been heavy. In the end, Billy had won.

Now, once more, comparative peace reigned in the West End where, although it is illegal, gambling still flourishes illicitly. Dice and cards are played, the house taking 10 per cent. As a good house can often average £4,000 a night, the profit on these "speilers" is tremendous.

Billy's success in the West End led to his making a lot of enemies. Many of them had been hurt, but many others were still challenging him. His position had always been a bit precarious, like that of a heavyweight sitting on a world title—so long as he was strong and fit, he ruled the roost. One sign of weakness and he was finished.

Arthurs, in the pubs and clubs of North London, when he was drunk or feeling reckless, would start boasting that he was going to "do" Bill. When these threats came back to Billy through the West End grapevine, everyone tensed, waiting for action.

Sure enough it came. A sudden knock on Arthurs' door one night and the quick flash of a knife. He was taken to hospital, badly slashed about the face, and shoulders.

Then he did the unforgivable thing in the underworld—

he squealed, telling the police that Billy Hill was the man who had "chivved" him, although this was, in fact, untrue.

Billy was arrested and charged at Bow Street with "G.B.H."—that is Grievous Bodily Harm. He pleaded "Not Guilty". But since Arthurs positively identified him, Billy was sent to trial at the Old Bailey. He came up before Sir Gerald Dodson, the Recorder, who was an old friend of his and who had sentenced him on three separate occasions to long terms of hard labour. This looked like being the fourth. However, to the surprise of the police and court officials, when Arthurs was called as chief witness for the prosecution he flatly refused to identify Billy. He said that the slashing had taken place in the hallway of his house, that it was dark and he was certain he had made a mistake.

Old Dodson lent forward and asked him a leading question: "Are you afraid of this man Hill?"

"No, m'lord," came the quavering answer.

After that, the Recorder had no alternative but grant Billy a discharge without a blemish on his character, although some mean looks passed between the police, Press and jury.

For a time, on the surface anyway, things appeared to be fine between Billy and Arthurs. They were seen around together and it appeared that the old quarrel was forgotten. But I often wondered, and so did a lot of Billy's friends.

Now, this tension I had noticed aboard *Flamingo* could only have one meaning for me. Worried, the moment I got Billy on his own, I confronted him with the whole thing.

He said nothing from which I could draw any conclusions. But it was clear that he was brooding about something.

"Look, Eddie," he said, "don't worry. When we get to Corsica, you leave the ship."

I knew him too well to start moralizing. But I thanked God I was not in Arthurs' shoes. He and I were working down in the engine-room, doing watches of six hours on and six off. It was no joke working in a temperature of a hundred and the stinking smell of diesel oil. We were continually oiling up, pumping off the leader tanks and greasing the stern glands. The ship's generator had a habit of running hot and we had to keep on shutting it down to repack the water gland on the pump. Often when I was alone, working and doing some repairs with Andrews, I looked at him and tried to picture what he would look like with his throat cut. I could not help thinking what a fantasy our whole voyage had been. Here we were on the high seas, with Interpol trailing us from port to port, just waiting for us to make one mistake. Eleven characters in a little ship. Soon there might only be ten....

Corsica, to my way of thinking, is one of the most beautiful spots on earth. We all gathered on deck in the early morning to drink in its rugged loveliness, and as we approached the new harbour at Bastia, it had that sleepy, tranquil look that brings calm to the soul. Unfortunately, we were soon to liven it up!

Kentish had no charts for the harbour, so we nosed our way in gently. The boys standing by for'ard and aft held the lines ready to moor.

"Anything ahead?" Kentish shouted.

"Oh, shut up, you silly old bastard," yelled Gerald Bull, "Ain't you got eyes to see with?"

It was quite extraordinary how the boys could never get used to anyone shouting an order!

Soon we were tied up alongside the quay. Not a breath of wind rippled the glassy calm. No one was there to greet

us and for once it looked as though no one had heard of *Flamingo*.

A lazy-looking gendarme strolled up.

"Bon jour, Monsieur. Avez vous fait un bon voyage?"

"Oui," I replied. "Who do we report to?"

"No one, Monsieur," he told me, "but when you go ashore, take your passports to be stamped at the *Sûreté*."

Billy, Ken Smith and I decided to go to stay at one of the local hotels, so we packed a bag and set off.

Bastia is a charming old town, renowned for its vendettas and its bandits, and its people are extremely good-looking. As we walked up the street, our heads kept turning from side to side as one jaunty filly after another came high-stepping along. Never had any of us seen so many beautiful girls all gathered together in one spot. They all look clean, healthy and interested. So were we! I decided that Bastia should be rechristened the Blessed Isle, and determined in my old age, if I lived that long, to buy a house and settle there.

The hotel we chose was small, clean and cheap for 800 francs a night—a price that entitled us to double rooms and included our laundry. After a bath and shave, we sat down to a delicious meal and a good bottle of wine. Corsican wine is rated among the best in the world and like the women there, it is strong and potent.

After lunch, we went down to the local beach for a swim, and again the scenery was in keeping with the local talent—quite beautiful. We got talking to two girls who promised to come and look over the *Flamingo*. Then we returned to the ship.

"There's a chap been down to see you," Gerry Bull told me. "Here's his card."

The card had a business address and a telephone number.

"He wants you to ring him up or call as soon as you come in," Gerry said, "as he may have some business for us."

"Let's go and see," Bill suggested.

We took a taxi and arrived at a nice-looking villa on the mountainside. A neatly dressed maid answered the door.

"Is m'sieur in?" I asked.

"Yes. Come in," she said.

The house was luxurious. The elegant paintings and the charming furniture showed that whoever owned the house was a person of taste.

"Good afternoon," said a voice behind us. "Mr. Chapman and Mr. Hill, I think."

Bill and I turned together. The individual who had spoken was certainly no oil painting. He looked about as tough as anything I had ever seen. Worse than that, this bird looked so crooked that the thought instantly crossed my mind that he must have had a hell of a job trying to lie straight in bed. Whoever had furnished the room we were in had done a good job, but it certainly was not this bird!

We sat down and sipped whisky out of cut-glass Georgian tumblers.

"I know you from Soho" our host said to Billy. "Do you remember me?"

"No," Billy admitted, "I can't say I do."

"Ah, you know Jimmy the Greek, Tony the Spoke and Golden Hands?"

"Sure," said Billy, "they were all customers down at my Spieler."

"Well, they're friends of mine. I did time with them. I was at Wandsworth for a stretch," our friend smiled benevolently.

"What did you get it for?" Billy asked.

"I am the guy that took a shot at Messina in Greek

Street," said our host with a touch of pride. "If ever I get my hands on him, I'll strangle the dirty bastard. He put my girl on the streets. I'll kill him one day for sure."

"Oh, yeh. I remember the case," Billy said. "You cut him up as well, didn't you?"

"No, notta him, his brother," our friend said.

After a few more reminiscences, Billy and I were satisfied that our boy friend really was who he claimed to be.

"Well," Billy asked, "What business can we do?"

"There is much money to be made if you are willing to go with merchandise to Poland and Russia—much money!" He looked at us meaningly. "Plenty money you make with your little boat. Twenty thousand pounds a trip!"

"That's a lot of gold," I said. "What do we carry?"

"Oh, many, many things," he answered. "Ball bearings, brass, copper wire—all different—all maka da money!"

"Yes, and where do we load it?" I questioned.

"I and my friends order it from American and Britain. Then we dispatch it in different boxes to a small port farther down the coast. Then along you come with your little boat. We load you and give you a manifest for India that say you carry tinned fishes. Plenty money. We all maka da fortune, yes? We work together. In one year we finish up the millionaires!"

Yes, I thought, and if the British Government get hold of us, I shall probably wind up in some nice damp cell, far away from civilization for a long time.

"Who pays us?" I asked aloud.

"The Russian Government."

"What currency?"

"What you like. You have him in dollars or in pounds."

Again I reflected that the bastards would probably

get us up to Gdynia, the port proposed, and seize the ship. Suddenly, the idea of working down a Siberian salt mine did not appeal to me. I did not like salt, anyway. Still, if one listens, one learns, and one never seems to stop learning.

"Do you ship much stuff from here?" I asked.

"Yes," was the answer, "but we need more ships."

"What about the French Government?"

"This is trade, my friend!" our host laughed. "The British and the Americans know all about it. He go on all da time. Business, my friends, business! Russia, she is lika big ox. She eat everything. Soon plenty war, plenty money! We must have war, then America, France and Britain have plenty work! What you think happen if the biga factories stop making the planes, the guns and the tanks? No war—we starve!"

I sat back and then shuddered. The picture was too awful to contemplate. Then we finished our drinks and shook hands with our host.

"We'll consider it and let you know," I told him.

When we were outside, Bill said: "Well, at least we seem to have created quite a stir with *Flamengo*. Perhaps if we could get hold of a few small hydrogen bombs, we could do a few nice little black market deals!"

We returned to the ship and lay sunbathing on the deck, while Bill and Gerry Bull recalled their days in Borstal together when they had always been in trouble. They were the natural ringleaders in any mischief or villainy. At one time some misguided authority had decided that Borstal should be run on public school lines, with "houses" prefects and the like. These prefects were even allowed to have the keys for the inside of the Borstal Institute on the Isle of Wight.

That was the Governor's idea. "Give these lads responsibility," he argued, "that's what they need. Let them

face up to life. It's psychological. Let's apply a little psychology."

So Billy and Gerry Bull and Mad Harry—a natural wrong-doer—were promoted to a position of authority. The first day that they were given the keys, they unlocked their quota of villains and led them on to the exercise yard, just in front of the Governor's house.

A favourite game with the boys, after the regulation gymnastics and breathing exercises, was "Follow my Leader". The exercises were going splendidly and the Governor's chest was swelling with pride, when Billy shouted: "Follow my Leader!"

Obediently, twenty villains lined up behind him.

"Forward!" he yelled, dashing ahead. Straight up to the garden wall they went and over the top.

"Stop!" screamed the Governor, dashing out of his house. "Stop! Come back! Do you hear me? Come back!"

But his twenty cuckoos had fled their nest!

Down the lane they raced—across country until they came to a lonely sweet shop, served by only one poor old man of seventy. They all piled in and grabbed everything—boxes of chocolates, cigarettes and all the money they could find in the till. Then off they went into the countryside to eat their fill. They hid the money for a "rainy day", then all ran back to Borstal.

"Don't ever mention that word psychology if you are an inmate of a Borstal or a visitor," was Billy's advice.

I had my usual hangover the next morning, having delighted too much in the lusts of the flesh. I was awakened by my cabin door being flung open. In walked two plain-clothes detectives.

"Your name Eddie Chapman?" they asked.

"Yes," I sighed, "for my sins it is."

"Well, get dressed and come with us to the *Sûreté*," they ordered.

"Jesus!" I moaned. "What time is it?"

"Six o'clock," answered the law.

"Don't you blokes ever sleep?" I asked. "Can't you come back at, say ten o'clock? That's a decent hour to call any civilized person."

However, they were adamant, and the two automatics they were carrying put argument out of the question, so I got dressed.

On the way out, I opened Billy's door.

"Going down to the Nick, old boy," I told him.

"What for?" he asked sleepily.

"Don't know, but I expect I soon will," I answered.

On arrival at the *Sûreté*, I was put in the C.I.D. room. Already in it was a huge bulk who was obviously the Chief. He wasted no time on manners. What was I doing in Corsica? Was my passport stamped for entry? I produced the passport and told him that I had had it stamped by his minions the previous day. That seemed to flummox him somewhat. He examined the immigration stamp to make sure it was not phoney. Then he fired more questions at me. I thought how amazing it was that to whatever country I went they asked the same silly questions, and naturally, got the same silly answers.

After two hours of beating abut the bush, during which time all my answers were carefully recorded, the Chief said:

"You know that you are not allowed into France or on to French territory?"

I said that this was news to me. He produced a slip of paper on which was written that Edward Chapman was considered undesirable to *séjour* on the fair shores of France, and, forthwith had to be expelled.

He asked me if I had any objections to having my photographs and fingerprints taken. I sighed deeply. I have had such records made by so many police forces in so many countries that if any Chief of Police happens to read this story and is without my fingerprints or has mislaid the shape of my ears or chin, I suggest that he writes to me or to Interpol, 60 Boulevard Gourion-Saint-Cyr for free copies!

While I was being documented, things were happening aboard *Flamingo*. Billy had immediately shot down to tell the boys the news.

"Eddie's been arrested by the local law here," he said.

They waited for three hours, and as I had not appeared, they agreed to wait until seven o'clock that evening. After that, they planned to take the Lugers off the ship, walk into the local jail, hold it up and get me out. Meanwhile, they had decided to keep *Flamingo's* engines running for a quick get-away.

Old Will Kentish nearly had a baby when he heard of this scheme.

"Christ!" he roared, "what about my tickets?"

"Your tickets?" Billy mocked. "Isn't Eddie a friend of yours? You should be the one who is keen to get him out. Why, it's for you we're doing this."

"Don't do it for me," Will pleaded. "He's not such a great friend of mine."

Of course, the boys were ribbing him by now.

"What happens if that French gun-boat in the harbour chases us?" Will asked, wide-eyed.

"Well," said Billy, "this is what we shall do. Gerry Bull here will hit you over the head with a spanner, then we'll tie you up and sling you in the hold. If anyone comes aboard, we'll tell 'em we overpowered you and took the ship out without your permission."

Will looked thoughtful. "Yes," he said, "that's a good idea."

He paced the deck nervously, then suddenly stopped and came to Jackie.

"Look," he said, parting a few strands of wispy hair. "See that scar? When you hit me, hit me right there. I was hit there as a kid and it didn't hurt much." Nervously, he began pacing back and forth again. Once more he approached Jackie.

"Listen," he muttered, "don't think I'm frightened or nervous, but I'm not very strong and a blow on the head might kill me." By this time he was shaking like a leaf. "Couldn't you just knock me out?" he begged.

"Sure, I could," Jackie agreed. "You'll be giving me a course, say, Sou'-sou'-west, and suddenly—Bang—I wallop you. Don't worry, Will, you won't feel a thing for a couple of days!"

Will went pea-green!

Luckily for all concerned, none of these drastic measures was necessary.

Things were going fine at the cop-shop. I was having a cup of coffee with one of the C.I.D. who was telling me all about the hot places to go in town. Then in came the Chief.

"Well, Mr. Chapman," he smiled, "You have twelve hours in which to leave Corsica."

"Fine," I said, then I got up and shook hands all round. My passport was returned to me with "Nul" printed over the immigration stamp.

I left the *Sûreté* in company with one of the detectives, a nice chap who knew all there was to know about Corsica, from the birth of Napoleon to the *'lite* of the Corsican bandits. Being a keen student of history, I was interested in all he had to tell.

We went together into a café. "That man sitting over there," said my companion, "was in his heyday responsible for twenty murders." He pointed to a venerable-looking old boy who might well have been the Bishop of Birmingham.

"Call him over," I suggested.

Up came our "Bishop". He was at least eighty, with a flowing white beard and was followed by a mangy sheep-dog.

"M'sieur Angelo, meet Eddie Chapman." Age-old vice shook hands with its modern counterpart. What a grip the old boy had! Even now his speech and carriage were virile and upright. But he was a real old villain, and over a glass of wine, he began recounting stories of his wicked past with all the glee of a school-boy.

"I remember," he told us, "when I held Iasi Tamlini to ransom. I cut off his left ear and sent it to his wife. She was a mean bitch and in any case she had a lover and wouldn't pay. So I cut off his right ear and sent her that. But still she wouldn't pay! However, his family did. So she got her husband back with no ears. He wasn't exactly pretty before, but, M'sieur, without his ears he was impossible. He eventually got a German doctor to make him a pair of false ears that he kept on with a piece of wire attached to his hat. Then he was for ever being insulted in restaurants for eating with his hat on. Yes, M'sieur, there are no lengths to which women will not go when they have a lover!"

I left the "Bishop" to his memories and went back to *Flamingo* with my escort. The boys were relieved to see me—especially Will Kentish. I went down to the cabin to have a call-over with Billy, telling him that I had to leave Corsica within twelve hours. Since we had business

to do in Barcelona, I suggested that we weighed anchor and got underway.

"Well, Eddie," Billy said, "it's time you saw Betty again, so why not have a break in England? You can rejoin the ship at Barcelona."

It was useless to argue with Billy, so I simply said: "O.K. Bill."

Then I went with Ken Smith and my detective to B.E.A. and bought a ticket for England for the next morning.

Before leaving I went down to say good-bye to the crew and the *Flamingo*, and my escort came with me. The little gun-boat was a hive of activity, and I realized that she must have been detailed to keep an eye on us. Then I had one of my brainwaves.

"Where's the signal book?" I asked Kentish. He passed it to me and I looked up all the signals, then went to the flag locker and picked out an assortment of flags and hoisted them. With the aid of the ship's glasses, I could see the panic-stations aboard the French gun-boat. The Commandant rushed on to the bridge, and started thumbing through his signal book. Ratings crowded the rail.

The signal I had run up read: "Heave-to or I fire!"

Suddenly there were hoots of laughter and fists were shaken in mock anger. I waved everyone good-bye and off we went, with escort, to the airport.

Fifty-five minutes later we touched down on the aerodrome at Nice, bathed in glorious sunshine. Hundreds of people crowded the airport, a guard of honour was drawn up for Haile Selassie, the Lion of Judah, who was expected to arrive half an hour after our plane. As I stepped off the plane, a voice shouted: "Is Mr. Eddie Chapman on the aeroplane?"

"Yes," I answered, "That's me."

There was a scramble of photographers and newspaper men. Some poor public relations officer was pleading with the photographers.

"Gentlemen, His Majesty's plane is just coming in."

The Press did not appear in the least interested. A moment later, the royal plane touched down and Haile Selassie walked out of it. He hardly had a single reporter or camera man. I feel I really should apologize to the Lion of Judah for stealing his thunder that day. But it was not my fault.

Two police pushed the reporters aside and I was escorted to the Immigration Office. The crowds gaped, while Ken Smith and I felt like real V.I.P.s.

After all, it does save so much trouble if one has not got to line up and produce one's passport or go through all the tiresome business of the Customs! Moreover, it is not often that one has the chance to steal the limelight from a king. I trust that His Majesty will not bar me from his country should he read this. He looked bored and tired. Well, so was I.

The police were soon busy again with the same old questions—name, age, and had I a pimple on the left cheek of my backside? It is astonishing how many new things they can think up to ask one. In Nice, two of them nearly came to blows over the colour of my eyes. One insisted that they were grey, the other hazel. For everyone's information, they are usually bloodshot.

I was informed that I must leave Nice at once.

"That is precisely my intention," I assured them. But in Corsica we had been told that we would have to wait until five in the morning for a plane on to London. As it was now only three in the afternoon, I did not relish the prospect of sitting in the airport for seven hours.

We trooped off to the offices of B.E.A.

"This man must be given a seat on the next plane!" the detectives told the harassed clerk.

"But, M'sieur, that is impossible. The plane is completely full."

"Then one of the passengers who is on it, must get off. It is essential that this man should leave France!"

A hurried conference ensued—a name was struck off the flight list. Anyone who has tried to get on a plane that is fully booked up, will realize now that all one needs is a little influence!

Ken and I were told that we must not leave the precincts of the airport, but if we wished we could use the lounge and the bar. A bar always appeals to me and soon we were dosing ourselves with large *vin du pays*.

While we drank, all kinds of officials came in to look me over. Notes were scribbled in notebooks and when I went to the lavatory, at least two police escorted me. Such service, such courtesy was touching in the extreme . . ." *Mes amis, je vous remercie!* I am sorry you have banned me from your fair country. I have always loved it. However, one day, who knows, a false beard, a false passport and—*Vive La France!*

At London Airport, as we landed, I saw from the window my old friend, George Stroud, the *Daily Express* cameraman, standing together with a little knot of reporters. As I came down the landing steps, the bulbs flashed and the reporters started asking questions. What was I going to do with *Flamingo*? Where was she bound?

George took me aside and said: "I have your wife waiting for you in one of the local pubs around the corner. Try to dodge everyone when you come through the Customs. We have a car waiting for you."

George's advice was good, but following it was another

matter. Reporters are much better than the police at keeping tabs on one—and so it was with me. No sooner had we got into the car than we were immediately followed.

George told me the news that Betty had arrived an hour earlier from Tangier, which was a complete surprise to me, as we had been virtually incommunicado since I had left that town.

At the pub, Betty was waiting, looking wonderful—brown from the sun—the picture of healthy, happy motherhood.

“Why didn’t you write to me?” she asked. Then she drew one breath and did not stop until she knew how many women I had slept with and all the other answers.

The reporters asked us to go to the Ritz Hotel for a drink, so we piled into two cars with mountains of luggage. I sat back and marvelled that while I can travel the world around with one suitcase, Betty if she goes away for a weekend needs a furniture van to take her baggage to the station. When we were in Africa that was fine, as we could always find twenty native boys to do the carrying. But, now, we were back in a civilized country!

At the Ritz, we disgorged, parked our luggage and went for a quiet drink. That evening, after telephoning every hotel in town, we were still without a roof over our heads. Finally, in desperation, I rang Pat Kennedy at the “Star”, my local pub.

“Sure, me boy,” said Pat. “You can come and stay with me!”

I was back home in England.

That night, in bed, Betty recounted to me her experiences after I had left Tangier. All the English community apparently sympathized with our stand against the Spaniards. Everyone appeared suitably outraged at our being asked to leave, for there was no charge against

any of the crew and none of them was wanted by the police. "Sherlock", our pal of the local C.I.D., denied all responsibility, saying that he was acting under orders. Two English ladies wrote a nice article about me in the *Dépêche Marocaine*, for which I thank them.

A few days later, came the shock. I picked up my *Daily Express* one morning, and staring me in the face was the headline—"FLAMINGO BLAZES—SKIPPER INJURED". The article went on to state that Will Kentish was badly burned in a fire that had broken out aboard the ship while moored alongside at Toulon. It further said that *Flamingo* had entered the naval harbour but had been shoo'ed away by naval launches. On berthing, French detectives went aboard to ask questions about her recent activities in North Africa. It was reported that some mysterious boxes had been confiscated.

To say the least of it, this news shattered me. What, I wondered, had been happening? Billy Hill had not rung me, and since our last arrangements had been that we were to meet in Barcelona, I had no idea where I could contact him.

The following day the papers carried headlines that read: "SKIPPER OF FLAMINGO PREFERS CHARGES OF ATTEMPTED MURDER AGAINST CREW".

Then, at last, a call came through from Billy.

"What the hell's happening?" I asked him.

"That dirty bastard, Arthurs, set fire to the ship and disappeared. The crew have all gone back to England, barring Jackie Dewer and Marcel, the Belgian. I can't tell you much over the phone. Will you get on a plane and meet me in Gibraltar? I'm leaving Cannes now."

"O.K." I told Billy. "See you on Monday or Tuesday at Gib."

That was on a Saturday morning. I rang up the B.E.A.

offices to book a seat, but was told that owing to fog and bad weather for the past three days, practically no planes had taken off. There was a long waiting list. The earliest I could hope to arrive in Gibraltar would be on the following Saturday. As Bill had left no address, I had to contain myself in patience until I heard from him again.

A few days later, I received a call from him and explained the situation.

"Wait in London," Bill said. "I will fly there on Friday. That blasted agent who was holding our money in Tangier has refused to give it up. He thinks because I'm banned from going back that we can't do anything about it. But I'm smuggling myself in somehow, and when I catch that rat, I'll chop his ears off!"

On Friday, I was waiting at London Airport for Bill, having got rid of the press boys by spreading the rumour that he was not arriving until Monday.

Bill arrived with Jackie Dewer and both of them looked fit and sunburnt. He was still his imperturbable self. I truly believe if Bill was about to roast in Hell, he would retain that air of icy coolness about him!

Soon we were installed in his flat and he was behind his bar pouring out pineapple juice for himself, while Jackie and I accepted whiskies. Then we got the low-down on what had happened.

After I had left Corsica, Bill decided to go to Cannes to meet a mutual friend of ours—a Frenchman who owned an attractive villa in Monte Carlo and a night club in Marseilles. He also ran one of the toughest mobs in France. I had met him some years previously. His rackets were many and varied, his interests widespread. My last visit to him had been an eye-opener.

He had a very dirty bar on the dock front at Marseilles,

and passing through, I had called to have a drink with him. As we were talking, an Arab came up and put a watch on the counter. Henri le Loup looked at it and opening the till, took out 300 francs, handing them to the Arab, who slunk off. The watch was thrown carelessly into a bucket beneath the counter. Next there came a shifty-eyed Frenchman who produced a wallet, some foreign currency and a woman's handbag. Again Henri, still talking to me, checked everything, passed some money over and threw the "goods" into buckets under his counter. In the hour that I was there, at least twenty customers of all types and sizes came in to carry on this bizarre trade. I was fascinated.

"What do you do here?" I asked Henri.

"Oh, I run all the dockside pickpockets," said this modern Fagin.

"Do you make money?"

"Come upstairs and I'll show you a week's work," he chuckled.

Upstairs was a long, bare room in which were some thirty to forty buckets, most of them full, and containing all manner of loot—watches, key chains, rings, compacts, silk scarves and handkerchiefs.

"How the hell do you sell it all?" I asked.

"I send it up to Paris by lorry every month. This is my most paying business," Henri replied.

Later that evening, he had taken me in his fine car to his beautiful country home, where we were greeted with the best food and wine, impeccably served. This extraordinary man had a beautiful wife and two handsome sons, and his façade of respectability was most impressive. After dinner, the local padre came begging for some donation or other, and dear Henri rewarded him handsomely.

The reason for Billy's visit to Henri was our mutual interest in business in Beirut, the nature of which is of no importance to anyone besides ourselves, except possibly Interpol, at this moment. So it was that Billy stayed in Cannes and *Flamingo* left, Jackie Dewer having been instructed never to let Arthurs out of his sight. Owing to bad weather, Will Kentish put into Toulon.

The events which followed I can only reconstruct from conversations with the boys who are now back in England.

Arthurs apparently suspected that Billy was after his blood. One night after he had been out drinking round the town with the crew, while the boys slept, he got out of his bunk, crept up on to the bridge and down into the engine-room. Carefully he sprinkled petrol over the engine, then, having climbed silently up the engine-room ladder, he flung down a lighted match that ignited the petrol, setting the engine-room ablaze.

Unfortunately for him, the captain, Will Kentish, was on the bridge and saw everything. He dashed for'ard to grapple with Arthurs. But the latter, realizing that he had been seen, caught hold of Will and threw him down into the flames. The crew, hearing Kentish's shouts, rushed up on deck, to be met by the quick-thinking Arthurs, who shouted: "I caught the skipper trying to set the bloody ship on fire!"

They pulled Will Kentish out of the fire, unconscious. By this time the alarm had been given and fire engines and their tenders were screaming down to the harbour. Security police, fully armed, swarmed down in their cars. Fifty yards away along the wharf from where *Flamingo* lay, were great storage tanks filled with petrol. At anchor, nearby, was the *Richelieu*, the pride of the French Fleet.

The crew were put under a strong guard. It was at

that moment that Jackie Dewer, who had gone over to Cannes to see Bill, turned up, just as an ambulance arrived to take the badly burned Kentish to hospital. Jackie was not allowed to join the crew. So he kept shouting to them from a distance, asking what had happened. They were all ordered to keep quiet, and then two policemen came over to Jackie, threatening to shoot him if he did not shut up.

The flames aboard *Flamingo* were finally extinguished and the entire crew were carted off for questioning. That questioning covered quite a large part of their activities. What had they been doing in North Africa, Italy and Corsica? Apparently, the police had learnt of our meetings with the representatives of the Sultan in exile. Although we had decided not to proceed with this affair, they were undoubtedly doing their damndest to pin it on us.

Then in their search they found a few cartons of cigarettes that Kentish had forgotten to declare and which were for the crew. They also found a few rounds of ammunition that we had bought in Tangier—a trivial amount, but enough to start them investigating. One character noticed some dark marks on the deck. These, he told Gerry Bull, were clearly caused by rolling guns along the deck, or by dragging heavy cases of ammunition. In fact, they were the results of rolling our reserve barrels of lubricating oil to a position aft, where we stowed them.

Everybody was searched, all fingerprints were taken, and only then were the boys allowed to return to the ship under a strong guard.

Immediately he was outside the *Sûreté*, Jackie Dewer rang up Bill in Cannes at the *Marinez*, to report what had happened. Bill hired a car and drove to Toulon. The moment Arthurs heard of Bill's imminent arrival,

he disappeared over the ship's side, leaving most of his belongings behind him. Personally, I am sure that he guessed that Bill knew what he had done and, scared stiff, he beat it.

Bill went straight to see Kentish who was in a bad way. He accused three of the crew of trying to murder him. No doubt this was due to the fact that they thought he had fired *Flamingo*. But Bill listened to his story and immediately pieced it together. Then, he went to look for Arthurs and found him gone. Up to this day, no one knows where he went. No one has heard of him since.

Finally, Bill returned to *Flamingo* to inspect the damage. It was considerable. The entire engine-room wiring was burnt out; the engine-block mountings were charred, while the engines, being heavy, had buckled the shafts and sunk down into the bilges. Holes had been burnt right through the decks.

Since the French police refused to allow anyone aboard except the crew and the owners, it was impossible for any of us to get an estimate for the damage. To add insult to injury, a fine of some £150 was imposed on the ship.

During all these happenings the *Sûreté* had not been inactive. We knew from our underground contacts, that extended into Interpol, that our plan to bring back the exiled Sultan had been discovered. This had not leaked out through any fault of ours. When we had had our last meeting with the Nationalists, one of the group attending had been a French informer. From that moment onwards, every move that we had made had been reported back to the French Intelligence. So, in the long run, I was well satisfied that we were not able to go down to Madagascar. The French, undoubtedly, would have prepared a nice little house-warming party for us!

But of the lot of us Arthurs' position is the worst of all. He has no friends and, so far as I know, no one has heard from him. He has just vanished into the limbo of the lost.

As for the future plans of the *Flamingo*, Billy and I have decided that when the French police are through with their investigations, we will re-fit her.

The world is a large place. As yet, neither of us have been down to the Pacific. From hearsay, I believe there are several Governments of Latin America who can use our peculiar talents. So, who knows, the *Flamingo* may go a-roving again?